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# A Tale of Two Cultures: A Qualitative Narrative of Nigerian Immigrant Parenting in the United States

Chinwe Onwujuba

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, [conwuj1@lsu.edu](mailto:conwuj1@lsu.edu)

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A TALE OF TWO CULTURES: A QUALITATIVE NARRATIVE OF NIGERIAN  
IMMIGRANT PARENTING IN THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Ecology

by

Chinwe Onwujuba

B.S., University of Nigeria, 2001

M.S., University of Louisiana, 2009

August 2015

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

This study is also dedicated to all immigrant parents who dream bravely, and endure profoundly in order to realize a hope and a future for their children.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My sincere gratitude goes to the parents and children who willingly offered their time and reflective insights in order to help deliver this narrative.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Current demographic estimates indicate that the foreign-born population makes up about 13% (40 million) of the total U.S. population. This number consists of immigrants from all over the world, with a larger majority originating from Latin America and Asia. Research in the area of immigrant adaptation is robust and compelling; however, it is replete with studies on immigrants from the cultural regions identified above, and not as much on other regions with relatively less numerical representation, specifically Africa. From this region, Nigerian individuals and families make up a larger portion of this immigrant group. This study employs a qualitative research method to explore the adaptation processes of Nigerian immigrant parents and their children.

Participant parents (N=30) and their children (N=15) were interviewed using a semi-structured format. Interview topics included acculturation inclinations; participants' perspectives of differences and similarities of raising children in the U.S and in Nigeria; influences of American culture on participants' parenting; cultural adjustments that have been made; intergenerational conflicts; language issues and cultural identity. A grounded theory method was used for data collection and analysis, after which the following themes emerged: (1) Acculturation: "I could pick some good from Nigeria and some good from here, and blend it together." (2). Respect: "A child just walks by you and doesn't acknowledge that you exist. That is very un-African." (3) Raising kids alone: "Nobody helps you; you are all by yourself." (4) Education: "If you want to become somebody, you have to go to school, education is the first key." (5) Discipline: "Freedom to train my child the way I ought to, not the way society is trying to compel me to train my child." (6) Language: "I had to explain myself over and over." (7) Bi-cultural children: "But I am Nigerian mom." Participants' narratives provide insight into immigrant families' unique adaptation process

of integrating and re-defining culture-of-origin predispositions within a new socio-cultural ecology. The significance of findings, implications for practice and suggestions for future research are discussed.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

Immigration is currently a significant global phenomenon. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2008) one in every 33 persons in the world today (3.1%) is a migrant. Globalization, international labor needs, and immigration policies have contributed to the continuous flow of human capital across the world, largely from developing to developed countries (Catton, 2006; Coleman, 2009; Dumont, Spielvogel, & Widmaier, 2010). The top 10 immigration countries of the world are: United States, Russian Federation, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Australia, and India (World Bank Migration and Remittances Fact Book, 2011). The U.S. has the highest number of total world immigrants (42.8%) followed by Russia (12.3%) (World Bank Migration and Remittances Fact Book, 2011). Net international migration into the U.S. accounts for one individual migrant every 44 seconds (US Census Bureau, 2013).

The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that as of 2010, the foreign born population in the U.S. was nearly 40 million, constituting about 13% of the total population. Of that number, the largest groups emigrated from Latin America (53%) and Asia (28%), with Africa comprising one of the smaller immigrant groups at 4% of the total immigrant population (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011). As with other immigrant groups, African immigrant flow increased after the 1965 passage of the Nationality Act which discontinued the low caps on national quotas from non-European nations. African immigrants are more likely to be admitted under the family re-unification provision or the Diversity program which allows increase in immigrant numbers from less represented nations (Capps et al., 2011; Logan & Thomas, 2012). Amongst this group, Nigeria has the largest representation of African immigrants with 19% of the total as of 2009 (Capps et al., 2011). The proposed study aims to address the adaptation



processes of Nigerian immigrant families, with particular reference to their parenting practices and young children's acculturation to a dual culture environment.

### **Migration Motivations**

Immigrants' pre-migration contexts inform both the decision to immigrate and adaptation to the new socio-cultural context (Burgelt, Morgan & Pernice, 2008). Reasons for immigration (as motivated by the social, political and economic context of pre-migration) largely include exploration, escape (as from political/religious persecution), family building, economic growth and career building (Piacenti, 2009; Ruth, 2008; Tharmaseelan, Inkson, & Carr, 2010). Further, implicit within migrant categorization (whether voluntary or involuntary) is the reason for immigration. Berry (2006b) proposed a grouping of immigrants into the following categories: *voluntary immigrants* are those who leave their home country by choice, in search of employment, economic improvement, and/or marriage or family re-unification. *Refugees* are individuals involuntarily displaced by war, persecution or natural disaster, and are re-settled in a new nation, usually resulting from international agreements. *Asylum seekers* leave their home country voluntarily for fear of persecution, violence, or death. *Sojourners* relocate to a new nation for a specific purpose and time period, with the intention of returning to their home country after the time has elapsed. Post-migration adaptation options and behaviors are evaluated and exhibited based on the reasons or motives for migration. Immigrants motivated by career building goals evaluate positively the behaviors of re-training and re-qualification for host country certifications. Even though the process is an inconvenience and devalues the qualifications obtained in the heritage country, career success projections in the new nation appear more valuable than that obtainable in the heritage nation (Andemariam, 2007; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010).

Immigrants sometimes engage in a re-working of their pre-migration identities (occupational, religious) in order to create a new transnational identity. Joseph (2013) analyzed the migration motivations of Malaysian women who emigrated to Australia. Results from in-depth interviews showed that migration motivations included ethnic and political discrimination in their home country of Malaysia. Post-migration adaptation challenges included discrimination based on their language proficiency and accents, and their educational qualifications were deemed sub-standard, thereby affecting their occupational options. These challenges were addressed through the choice to negotiate their pre-migration identities within new cultural, occupational, and religious spaces. Also, refugees who experienced a forced migration often experience feelings of loss, discrimination, hopelessness, diminished social status, and depression. Their adaptation can involve a manifestation of PTSD symptoms, and a disinterest in interacting with the host culture because of the many stressors, negative experiences, as well as the shock of their involuntary relocation (Chu, Keller & Rasmussen, 2013; Phillimore, 2011; Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans & Asic-Kobe, 2011).

### **Host Country Reactions**

Immigrants' adaptation to their new country necessarily occurs in the space between individual motivations and host country accommodations (Burgelt, Morgan, & Pernice, 2008; Joseph, 2013). For example, Canada's Multiculturalism Act supports immigrant integration; immigrants' distinct cultural orientations are recognized, respected and promoted, and they are encouraged to maintain their heritage culture, while participating fully in the host country culture (Berry, 2003; Bhatt, Tonks & Berry, 2013). This is contrasted with an assimilation perspective held by some European nations, e.g. France (Givens, 2007). In a study by Georgas, Berry, Shaw, Christakopoulou, and Mylonas (1996) on the influence of host country immigration policies and

national attitudes towards immigrants' family values retention, Greek immigrants residing in Canada (where immigrants' cultural integration is encouraged) showed a greater retention of family values than those living in Europe (the Netherlands and Germany). Given negative or discriminatory reactions from the host country, immigrants' adaptation is significantly molded to reflect their experiences.

Neto (2010) reported that immigrant youth's increased experiences of discrimination influenced their psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. Mexican youth who migrate to the U.S. for economic or general advancement reasons, but feel persecuted or rejected by American Immigration laws and anti-immigrant sentiment have been known to return to their home country (Tucker, Torres-Pereda, Minnis, & Bautista-Arredondo, 2013). Faced by unfavorable conditions, immigrants have been shown to adapt by assessing the benefits of being in the US and deciding to overlook the challenges presented by anti-immigrant sentiment or adaptation challenges, such as workplace discrimination or low wages, and a decrease in family time (Bacallao, & Sokowski, 2007; Dalla, Ellis, & Cramer, 2005; Joseph, 2013).

Within the US, the notion that immigrants are: (a) unable to, or choose not to assimilate, (b) are siphoning the nation's economic resources, and (c) are not upholding the values of the country is a nativist sentiment that dates back to earlier immigration waves (Citrin & Sides, 2007; Simon & Alexander, 1993). In the decades of the 1800s, an unprecedented immigrant flow inspired claims that immigrants' low cost of living made it hard for indigenous Americans to compete with them for jobs. This claim fanned the flames of anti-immigrant sentiment which led to the origination of a powerful anti-immigration movement that endured for about a decade from 1835 (Schlesinger, 1921). The members of this movement called themselves 'Native Americans'; they sought to use political clout in restricting the liberties and unfettered access of

immigrants. Restrictive government legislation has included the Naturalization Act (1790) which restricted citizenship to free White people; the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) which barred Chinese immigration; and the National Origin Quota Acts (1921, 1924) which restricted entry to Eastern and Southern Europeans (Koven, 2012; Ngai, 2007). These Acts were all exclusionary and singled out particular groups thought to be a threat to the integrity of the ‘American’ stock.

Reactions of the host country entail the degree of perceived and actual acceptance of the immigrant population. Public opinion on immigration has fluctuated within the past decade, depending on nationally experienced or isolated incidents involving immigrants (Muste, 2013). In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attack, immigrants were perceived in a negative light and Americans took a critical stance on immigration legislation (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Jones, 2011). Media representations of immigrants have been and remain instrumental in shaping public opinion on immigration as well as reactions to immigrants (Dunaway, Goidel, Kirzinger, & Wilkinson, 2011; McKeever, Riffe, & Carpentier, 2012); For example, graphic media images of illegal immigrants scampering across the freeway in a desperate and determined bid to gain entry into the US shape public opinion and reaction. Also, media stories associating Hispanic immigrants with crime or economic costs, and depicting Asian immigrants as studious create categorizations of ‘problematic’ and ‘ideal’ immigrants. Brader et al. (2008) propose that adverse emotional reactions to immigrants as a whole, and ethnic groups in particular create anxiety, group threat, and negative reactions independent of cognitive beliefs about immigration.

From a structural perspective, legal status upon entry to the U.S. facilitates adaptation and perceived acceptance (Menjivar, 2008; Portes & Rivas, 2011; Rumbaut, 2008). Legal status affords relatively easier access to jobs and housing anywhere in the U.S., property, and services like healthcare, economic subsidies, and higher education (Monger & Yankay, 2011). Legal

immigrants, especially those with professional knowledge and skills in the labor shortage areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are perceived as essential and contributory to the resources and development of the nation, leading to encounters of relative acceptance (Portes & Rivas, 2011). Visa allocation policies in the U.S. indicate an institutional preference for high skilled, professional immigrants. Kretsedemas (2011) reports that high skilled non-immigrants are granted H1 visas that allow for dual intent in visiting the U.S. (i.e., they can work, and also have the option of adjusting to legal permanent residency). High skilled workers are granted the opportunity to be incorporated into relatively high wage, employment sectors, and also to obtain permanent residency status, with all of its attendant benefits (Kretsedemas, 2011).

Illegal immigrants, conversely, tend to be low-skilled, low-wage immigrants who tend to be perceived as liabilities to the nation's development and resources (Diaz, Saenz & Kwan, 2011). This perception is evidenced by the anti-immigration legislation enacted by some U. S. States, examples being Arizona's Senate Bill 1070, and Georgia's House Bill 87 (Esses, Brochu, & Dickson, 2012). Both bills were crafted and signed into law in response to economic challenges in the States; perceived to be caused by the number of illegal immigrants who were presented as economic threats and competitors. The bills allowed for law enforcement officers to detain any individuals suspected of being illegal immigrants. Because of the sheer number of illegal or undocumented immigrants in the U. S. today (11.1 million as at 2011: Passel & Cohn, 2012), and the highly public and politicized discourse on immigration reform (or the lack thereof), illegal immigrants are generally perceived as the 'crisis' of immigration policy (Jaret, 1999). Discussions explicating the socio-economic pros and cons of illegal immigration highlight the economic boost availed by the cheap labor provided by illegal immigrants, and their labor

concentrations in jobs not wanted by host country citizens (Esses et al., 2012). Opposing views present economic and symbolic cultural maintenance concerns (i.e., illegal immigration takes away jobs and resulting income from citizens, and also diminishes the integrity of American culture and values) (Brader et al., 2008; Espenshade, 1995).

Host country reactions to immigrants are observable in institutionalized responses to immigrant issues. For example, immigrants' educational accomplishments obtained in the heritage country are generally deemed below that of their non-immigrant counterparts of equal educational achievement (Andemariam, 2007; Joseph, 2013). Those seeking professional or educational advancement often have to re-train or re-qualify for such opportunities (Joseph, 2013; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010). Kolawole (2009) cites the occupational challenges encountered by internationally educated nurses in their quest to become Registered Nurses (RN) in Ontario, Canada. Requirements for licensure include: (1) completion of an acceptable RN or Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) educational program, (2) recent safe nursing practice, (3) passing the RN or RPN examination, (4) language fluency, (5) registration or eligibility for registration in the jurisdiction of the completed nursing program, (6) Canadian citizenship or permanent resident, as well as (7) good character and Canadian criminal record synopsis (College of Nurses of Ontario [CNO] 2006). Even though a rationale for the educational requirements is variability in immigrant nurses' educational programs, the challenges presented by these requirements prevent migrant nurses from completing their registration and contributing their wealth of human capital to their adopted nations.

Although America exhibits a minimalist federal response to immigration, as denoted by a lack of comprehensive federal immigration laws, limited socio-economic support for immigrants (e.g., Welfare Reform Act [1996] that excludes immigrants from the Welfare program), and the

autonomy given to states in addressing immigration issues (Esses et al., 2012; Koven, 2012), there are certain indices of relative immigrant incorporation. Mainstream acceptance of the presence of immigrants is evident in: (a) the educational system that accommodates immigrant children, and provides support for multiculturalism and diversity [children with illegal immigrant status are, however, only accommodated up to high school (Androff et al., 2011; Rumbaut, 2008)], (b) the entertainment industry that promotes and profits from cultural expression, and, (c) in language diversity (as evidenced by the use of Spanish and other languages for government and business transactions). Immigrants' perceived acceptance therefore, is indicated by the structural and individual opportunities afforded for adaptation and integration. A related question to be addressed in this study, therefore, concerns Nigerian immigrants' perception of acceptance and the impact on their adaptation and parenting. Essentially, how does their conceptualization of U.S. society as accepting or rejecting influence how they socialize their children?

### **Immigrant Families**

Immigration is a systemic process in the sense that a decision to emigrate is typically not a solely individual decision. The immediate and/or extended members of the family system and even communities are generally involved in the actualization of an emigration decision (Borjas & Bronars, 1991; Tucker et al., 2013). Massey (1996) expounds on a 'new economics of immigration' (see Stark & Malone, 1985, cited in Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002) in which the family is the driving force of immigration. In developing countries, decisions to migrate are made by the family, household, and sometimes entire communities. Individuals leave their home country in order to diversify family or household income. In the previous waves of immigration, there have been some recorded incidents of entire families indenturing themselves in order to gain passage to the New World. Family members who gained appreciable employment and

fulfilled their time of indenture frequently paid off remaining bonds by which their relative was held (Daniels, 2002). Family members who already resided in colonial America were sometimes on hand to receive and pay off a relatives' travel fare upon arrival (Daniels, 2002). During the 1900s, when many Italians migrated to the New Continent, individual migrations were sometimes followed by whole communities transplanted from their native land to America, indicating a communal decision to emigrate and a social networking system that facilitated migration (Vecchio, 2006). In their study of Mexican youth migration to the United States, Tucker et al. (2013) provide accounts of Mexican youth being brought over by family members already in the United States. Contemporary migration settlement decisions are still influenced, to a degree, by family/group/community presence in the host location (Borjas & Bronars, 1991; Tucker et al., 2013). The high regard for families' impact on adjustment is indicated by current US immigration legislation regarding immigrant families. Built on decades of discourse, during which it was declared an inalienable right for an immigrant to have the presence and comfort of his family (Kerry, 2013), the Harts-Cellar Act of 1965 instituted family re-unification as an important and defining aspect of immigration legislation, allowing for increased family input on immigrant adaptation (Kerry, 2013; Reimers, 2013).

Immigrant families tend to be dynamic and fluid in their origination and organization. Some originate as whole families embarking on transnational relocation together or separately [i.e., one or a few members go first and then are later joined by the rest of the unit (Buriel, 2012; Gindling & Poggio, 2012; Solheim, Rojas-Garcia, Olson, & Zuiker, 2012)], other families begin as a transnational marriage after which one spouse brings the other over to begin a family (Buriel, 2012; Nandan, 2007), and some are post-immigration unions in the host country (Lichter, Carmalt, & Qian, 2011). Immigrant family structure tends to retain the form and



appearance of traditional heritage nation families (i.e., more young married couples with children) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). These families also tend to retain and perpetuate the family processes and traditional family values prevalent in the socio-cultural environment of the home country, like role fulfillment and gender expectations (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2008; Behnke, Taylor, & Parra-Cardonna, 2008; Zhou, 2012).

### **Immigrant Children**

Adaptation challenges also affect children of immigrant parents, who are faced with the task of negotiating an identity between two or more cultures (Baffoe, 2011). Children of immigrants are the fastest growing subpopulation of immigrants (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008; Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011). Data on children of immigrants shows a steady increase across 3 decades; 13.4% in 1990, 19.1% in 2000, and 24.3% in 2011 (MPI, 2012). This growth rate, in concert with the challenges faced by immigrant families, warrants an analysis of the particular challenges encountered by this group of children.

Just as with adult immigrants, children of immigrants are homogenous in the sense of their originating from immigrant families, but they also exhibit a heterogeneity arising from differences in their parents' human and financial capital, legal status, and degree of incorporation into the host society (Landale et al., 2011; Rumbaut, 2008). Studies show differences in developmental and adaptation outcomes resulting from parents' legal status and pre-migration education and skills (Abrego, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013). Pong and Landale (2012) present a study on the influences of pre- and post-migration parental characteristics on children's adaptation and academic achievement. In the study they present individual level pre-migration parental characteristics, a hypothesis essentially different from previous studies that correlate country of origin characteristics with children's academic outcomes. Results showed that

parental pre-migration education and socio-economic status (SES) are significantly related to cognitive stimulation in the home and academic achievement. Further, Rumbaut (2008) presented a comparison of the pre-migration contexts of Asian and Mexican immigrants. Rumbaut found that Asian immigrants, specifically Filipinos, Chinese and Koreans, arrive in the U. S. with significant human capital in the areas of education and entrepreneurship (Rumbaut, 2008; U.S. Census, 2012). The children of this group of immigrants tend to accomplish academic successes which enable easier incorporation and greater social mobility. Mexican immigrants, on the other hand, are among the least educated immigrants, a situation that poses a disadvantage for their children's academic success and social mobility (Pong & Landale, 2012).

Because of their parents' status and characteristics, immigrant children have a greater tendency to live in poverty, in households with a greater number of members, and to have parents with educational qualifications lower than that of the native population (Hernandez, 2008; U.S. Census, 2012). Immigrant children, particularly the children of unauthorized immigrants, are less likely to have health insurance and to benefit from publicly-funded social welfare provisions like food stamps or Medicaid (Brown, Wyn, Yu, Valenzuela, & Dong, 1999; Capps et al., 2004; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013). A contributing factor could be immigrant parents' perceptions of such welfare provisions; undocumented immigrant parents might be unaware of their child's eligibility for such services, or be unwilling to interact with government agencies for fear of adverse consequences (deportation, detainment) if they tried to obtain such services (Capps et al., 2003; Johnson, 2007).

Immigrant children face the unique challenge of adapting to a bi-cultural environment. They are developmentally situated between their parents' culture of origin, and the culture of the dominant host society. Not surprisingly, bi-cultural adaptation can bring on adaptation stressors

(Alvarado & Ricard, 2013). These stressors include reconciling overt and subliminal pressures to conform to mainstream socio-cultural characteristics (like dress, language, entertainment, and food), with familial requirements or desires for ethnic identification (Zhou, 1997). Questions such as “How do I fit in?”, “What nationality do I identify with?”, and “Which side should I stay loyal to?” can cause confusion and adaptation challenges (Balogun, 2011; Zhou, 1997). In spite of the challenges faced, many immigrant children, particularly minority immigrant youth, have shown resilience through the development of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992; Weaver, 2010). Ethnic identity is the attitude towards, and feelings of belonging to an ethnic group (Marks, Szalacha, Lamerre, Boyd, & Coll, 2007). This construction of an ethnic sense of self can be a daunting task, especially for immigrant minority children who experience family cultures and values that are distinct from that prevalent in the host society. Ethnic identity plays a role in educational and social development, and is a sub-component of the essential developmental task of identity development among adolescents, as proposed by Erikson (Miller, 1993). Erikson (1968) maintained that an essential requirement for identity development to occur is the context of social interactions - first with the family, and then with members of the community and the larger society. The family’s role is pivotal, however, because it is the child’s first encounter with an identity paradigm through parents’ identification, modeling, supporting, challenging, accepting, or protesting their child’s developing identity.

The impact of family culture may be particularly significant in young immigrant children’s ethnic identification. Rodriguez, Rodriguez, and Mojica (2012) present an analysis of the systemic nature of development, in general, and ethnic identity development in particular. They assert that “people do not develop in isolation, that we are part of various systems, and that the interaction among systems makes the emergence of ideas, concepts, values, and social

representations possible” (p. 264). They also establish the family system as fundamental to the development of ethnic identity by their definition of the family as “a system with history, marked by traditions, events, rites, and practices related to upbringing, education, care, recreation, food, the way of relating to others, etc” (p. 265). Consequent development of behaviors indicative of ethnic identity is in line with the (family) system’s dynamic (Haan & Leander, 2011; Rogriguez et al., 2012).

Parents’ nativity and cultural values inform the ethnic socialization practices they provide for their children (Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & O’Campo, 1993; Knight et al., 2011). These ethnic socialization practices that parents engage in help shape, and maintain young adolescents’ ethnic identity (Hughes et al., 2006; Umana-Taylor, 2006). Knight et al. (2011) established that mother-child interactions were particularly significant in young adolescents’ ethnic identity development, as well as the internalization of Mexican-American values. Fathers’ roles were not as significant as mothers’, but it can be assumed that the presence of another parent or significant other would enhance the ethnic socialization process (Behnke et al., 2008). Further, since immigrant children are more likely than non-immigrant children to live with two parents (Child Trends, 2013), it can be assumed, then, that immigrant children would experience more of their parents’ cultural/ethnic values, practices, and expectations.

Immigrant parents typically maintain stronger attachments to their heritage culture and strive to pass on their cultural attachment and identity to their children (Nesteruk & Marks, 2011; Renzaho et al., 2011). Elias and Lemish (2011) in their study on immigrant parents’ cultural transmission found that Russian immigrant parents used media products (videos, television programming) to encourage and teach their children to speak Russian. Through their participation and perception of parents’ cultural practices, children internalize parents’ cultural

expectations and develop an ethnic identity. Mothers who enculturate their children through interactional behavior and expressed family obligation expectations (i.e., behaviors expected of a child) also impart a cultural identity to their children (Knight et al., 1993; Su & Costigan, 2009). Su and Costigan expound this idea by noting that abstract cultural values are translated into concrete conversations or behavioral requirements that include respect for parents and elders, helping around the home and eating native foods.

The combination of degree of acculturation and child-rearing practices plays a significant role in children's ethnic identity development. The acculturative influences that impinge on immigrant parents' child-rearing practices are conceptualized as parenting acculturation (Bornstein & Lansford, 2010). Parenting acculturation involves immigrant parents' constant negotiation between heritage and host culture values, and the changes they make in order to help their children optimally adapt. In a related study by Cheah, Leung, and Zhou (2013), acculturating immigrant Chinese mothers related how their on-going acculturation to American parenting values and behaviors impacted their (heritage culture) parenting values and practices to create a morphed ideology of parenting that was motivated by the desire to help their children achieve optimal socio-cultural and academic adaptation.

Immigrant parents, as noted previously, use their cultural frame of reference to determine what cultural practices and values to maintain and which are dispensable. For instance, a study of Pakistani and Asian immigrant parents found that immigrant parents acculturated to changes in practical issues like celebrating Western holidays, but retained core cultural values regarding dating and arranged marriages (Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). Immigrant parents' greater orientation towards cultural maintenance potentially indicates their acculturation choice. The degree of parental embeddedness in the heritage culture through interactions with ethnic social

networks and retention of ethnic behavior (language, food, media, dress) indicates the importance placed on ethnic values. Deliberate ethnic socialization of these values significantly contributes to the development of a clearly defined ethnic identity for children. Immigrant parents who expose their children to cultural maintenance behaviors like eating heritage culture foods, ethnic media and literature, social interactions with ethnic peers and families, and language socialization provide clear ethnic delineation for their children (Elias & Lemish, 2011; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Tsai, Park, Liu, & Lau, 2012). Knight et al. (1993) established that mother-child interactions that placed emphasis and value on Mexican-American cultural values facilitated ethnic identity development and internalization of Mexican-American values.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Acculturation-** Migration does not occur in a vacuum. Immigrants leave one culture and cultural paradigm and enter another, bringing with them cultural experiences, world views, and norms. Adaptation to the new socio-cultural environment entails a reassessment of what values one is willing to hold immutable and which can be re-evaluated. This process of cultural metamorphosis is termed acculturation. The range of definitions for this concept goes from changes proposed solely in the immigrant individual or group to a transactional process involving change in both host and immigrant groups. Martin et al. (2007) define acculturation as “a process of culture learning and behavioral adaptation that takes place when individuals are exposed to a new culture” (p. 1290); Yoon et al. (2011) define acculturation as a process of immigrants’ gradual adaptation of their language, behaviors, beliefs, and/or values as a result of contact with the mainstream culture. This individual-focused perspective highlights the burden (directly and/or indirectly) placed on immigrants to assimilate or adapt to the majority culture.

A transactional process perspective includes one of the earliest acculturation definitions. Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) describe acculturation as the phenomenon that occurs when groups of individuals having different cultures come in continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural pattern of either or both groups. Berry (2001) presents a related definition of acculturation as a process involving two or more groups, with consequences for both. In the U.S., cultural contact-inspired changes include: a wide variety of ethno-specific cuisine, immigrants' English language acquisition, as well as accommodations for, and inclusion of, Spanish and other languages in public and private institutions (Mazzolari & Neuman, 2011; U.S. Census, 2013). This bi-directional definition recognizes the potential for change in both contact parties. Immigrants are, however, more susceptible to an experience of greater cultural change than the host majority, because of their relative minority status, as well as the host majority's greater demographic dominance and institutional power (Berry, 2001; Bourhis, Montaruli, El-Geledi, Harvey, & Barette, 2010).

These two perspectives are representative of changes in acculturation conceptualization; earlier models of acculturation described linear, uni-dimensional movement of one cultural group (the ethnic minority group) from culture A (culture of origin) to culture B (host culture), resulting in a diminishing effect on culture A (Miller, 2007; Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003). Immigrants' eventual assimilation was predicted as inevitable. They were expected to move from an exclusive grounding in their pre-migration cultural paradigm, to a bicultural phase and eventually either abandon their heritage culture for the mainstream culture, or blend into a cultural 'melting pot' (Gordon, 1964; Sam, 2006). Contemporary theorizing on acculturation favors a bi-dimensional perspective of cultural adaptation (Berry, 1997; Schwartz, Unger,

Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010) and has been generally associated with John Berry's decades-long work on acculturation.

Current modifications to acculturation theory include suggestions that acculturation should be conceptualized as a propensity to engage with the host culture in particular ways, depending on context, setting, and time (Miller et al., 2013; Schwartz et al., 2010). A related definition identifies acculturation as a dynamic process that might involve a change, over time, in individuals' pattern of cultural engagement (Berry, 2006a, Berry, 2006b; Ho, 1995; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000; Ying, 1995). These definitions imply that acculturation is not compartmentalized; individuals do not rigidly maintain a particular type of cultural engagement across settings and contexts, and in complete rejection of alternate strategies. For example, an assimilated individual would not be expected to have zero engagement with the home culture. Instead, Berry's categorization is considered in terms of higher or lower propensity for cultural engagement to either the host or home cultures (Miller et al., 2013; Schwartz et al., 2010).

Immigrant acculturation is dynamic and nuanced; the acculturation strategies identified are essentially reactions to the social ecology of the host country, at different times. This idea of a context-driven acculturation strategy choice is pivotal in understanding the intricate components of Nigerian immigrant family acculturation. It embodies the fundamental goal of this study, which is to try and tease out the cultural domains, value paradigms, and contextual settings that influence everyday acculturation decisions.

Miller et al. (2013) expand on this notion through their domain-specific acculturation strategy hypothesis. They propose that individuals apply varying strategies across behavioral or values domains depending on context, time, and settings. Essentially, immigrants are proposed to pick and choose what values and behaviors they adopt based on their cultural frame of reference,



and the reasons for immigration (Cheah et al., 2013). Using a Nigerian immigrant family as an example, a mother could be assimilated with regards to involvement with her children's education, but separated when it comes to values on dating and intimate partner relationships. Similarly, in their study of Asian American university students, Miller and colleagues found that 67% -72% of their total sample used different behavioral and values domains. Such findings provide evidence supporting the domain specific acculturation hypothesis, and also inform modifications to the overall conceptualization of acculturation theory.

Berry (1979, 2003) provided foundational conceptualizations that have been applied to contemporary issues of immigrant acculturation. He identified two key issues influencing an ethno-cultural group's adaptation in the host country: (a) cultural maintenance (whether or not one's own cultural identity is worth maintaining) and, (b) participation (whether or not to participate in the socio-cultural life of the host country). These dimensions (maintenance and participation) could exist as independent constructs, meaning that an immigrant could desire one without relinquishing the other. The answers to the two key issues informed a four-fold classification of acculturation orientations. They are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 2003). *Integration* occurs when the host culture is adopted along with the maintained heritage culture. *Assimilation* involves discarding the heritage culture and adopting the host culture. *Separation* manifests when the host culture is rejected and heritage culture retained. Finally, *marginalization* involves a rejection of both cultures.

An acculturation framework has been implicated in immigrants' subjective wellbeing, family enculturation practices, gender role adaptations, adolescent identity development, and optimal adjustment among other outcomes (Bafoe, 2010; Bourhis et al., 2010; Georgas, Berry, Shaw, Chistakopoulou, & Mylonas, 1996; Grant, 2007; Mitra, Rafat, & Victor, 2013; Wang,

Kim, Anderson, Chen, & Yan, 2012; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, & Cleary, 2012). Berry's model of acculturation is implicit in its suggestion that immigrants chose particular acculturation strategies; however, there are demographic and contextual factors that impinge on the acculturative decisions made by immigrants. Neighborhood context, geographical location, school and community affiliations, pre-migration culture and other ecological factors may orient immigrants in general, towards particular strategies, and parents towards particular parenting practices (Cheah et al., 2013; Cruz-Santiago & Garcia, 2011; Hochhausen & Perry, 2010). The proposed study seeks to establish what ecological influences inform immigrant parents' acculturation process, and also how/if acculturation mediates parenting practices.

**Ecological Systems-**Any attempt to present a comprehensive view of immigration must consider pre- and post- migration decisions made within families and communities that are further embedded in a social, economic, and cultural matrix of influence (Massey, 2012).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) provides insight into the contextual influences on adaptation, by identifying nested system levels of the environment that combine to impact individual and family processes. System levels identified include the *micro-system* (the proximally significant interactional system; i.e, the family, school, community, church etc), the *meso-system* (interactions between micro-system components; e.g., interactions between the family and the community), the *exo-system* (distally significant interactional system; e.g., Immigration laws affecting employers of immigrant workers could lead to income cuts or job losses), and, the *macro-system* (the overarching social, economic and political structure of the environment). Systems-level interactions that influence acculturation strategy choice include conflicts or agreements between meso-system components (e.g. family and community having divergent cultural values). Macro-system indices like overall political and public rhetoric

regarding immigration, institutionalized opportunities for social mobility, ethnic integration, and host culture participation opportunities for immigrants, also constitute contextual influences on a choice of acculturation strategy.

Decisions on where to settle also reflect immigrants' ecological systems considerations for optimal adaptation. Immigrants endeavor to settle in areas with the most contextual advantage and opportunities for fulfilling immigration goals (Newbold & Achjar, 2002). Geographic/spatial selectivity takes full advantage of already established immigrant flows that provide economic opportunities, a familiar socio-cultural context, and diminished obstacles (Jones, 1995). Texas and California, for instance, have historically provided employment opportunities for migrants from Mexico, thus establishing a migrant flow and community that encourages further migration (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

An ecological systems approach reveals the greater nuances involved in the choice of an acculturation strategy, one of which is the issue of contextual influences on adaptation: do immigrants adopt different acculturative behaviors in different contexts? Macro-system assimilation might make way for meso-system separation choices; for example, a father could exhibit assertive and individualized behavior while in a professional work environment, but socialize his children to show adult deference and family reverence, filial responsibilities and family coherence (Dasgupta, 1998). This type of selective assimilation (Paraado & Flippen, 2005) is inspired by immigration goals and pre-and post-migration experiences. In the same vein, immigrants choose which cultural domains to acquire and which to reject, as they possess the unique capability of using their culture of origin as a frame of reference for deciding which host country cultural domains to adopt and which to reject (Cheah et al., 2013). Termed enculturation, immigrants selectively retain or acquire parts of the heritage culture as well as parts of the host

culture (Weinreich, 2009). This integration strategy of acculturation allows for a co-existence of the two cultures and has been identified as the optimal acculturation strategy (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

The ecological context within which immigrant children live also plays a distinct role in their ethnic identity development and subsequent adjustment. Micro- and meso-system interactions between the family, school, and community bring encounters with different cultures that spur ethnic identification in young children (Marks et al., 2007); exo-system effects of social stratification by socio-economic status and race/ethnicity impacts social interactions, neighborhood contacts and inter-ethnic relations (Johnson, 2007); and macro-system requirements for immigrant children to become either assimilated/ ‘Americanized’, or integrated/multicultural has been shown to affect children’s identity development and academic success (Akiba, 2007). The socio-cultural environment that immigrant children are exposed to, therefore, allows interactions and subsequent identification with one or more national, ethnic or racial groups.

### **Gaps in Previous Research**

Most of the empirical research on immigrant family adjustment has been done with Latino or Asian families as the subject population (Abrego, 2011; Ayon & Naddy, 2013; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Behnke et al., 2008; Campbell, 2008; Cheah et al., 2013; Dillon, de la Rosa & Ibanez, 2013; Farver & Yoolim, 2000). As the largest prevailing groups of immigrants, this state of affairs is comprehensible. However, the African immigrant group is a growing population (Capps et al., 2011; Thomas, 2011) and increasing attention needs to be given to immigrant families from the continent in order to provide a comprehensive perspective of all immigrant families.

A commensurate amount of research has also not gone into the acculturation decisions, strategy choices, and perceptions of immigrant children. Immigrant children's cultural epistemology has largely been derived from parents' perspectives. A majority of studies on the adaptation of children of immigrants are characterized by adolescent population samples (Farver & Yoolim, 2000; Kim, Chen, Wang, Shen, & Orozco-Lapray, 2013; Kim & Park, 2011; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). Young children have often been perceived as incompetent research participants. Allowing adults to speak for children reproduces uni-dimensional representations of children as passive, vulnerable, and lacking in social agency (White, Laoire, Tyrell, & Carpena-Men' dez, 2011). This has resulted in a predominance of research *on*, but not *with*, children.

Young children's capabilities for complex, abstract reasoning have been identified by cognitive theorists, such as Piaget, as limited in the younger years. However, a constructivist perspective portrays children as active co-creators of, in this case, ethnic identity. Further, in some cultures, the age of 7 is regarded as the age of reason (Rogoff, Sellers, Pirrotta, Fox, & White, 1975); an age which corresponds with Piaget's pre-operational stage (Miller, 1993). Interest in the developmental quality of ethnic identification and inter-cultural adjustment drives the proposed study's sample of children in middle childhood/early adolescence. This age period is a more ideal time to internalize cultural values. Younger children would likely adhere to parental values as a result of sanctions (positive or negative). As they grow older there is a greater capability for abstracting the underlying ideologies that drive parental expectations of cultural behavior.

While there has been significant research done on ethnic identity development amongst adolescents (Alvarado & Ricard, 2013; Bafoe, 2011; Jurva & Jaya, 2008; Song, 2010; Su & Costigan, 2009), studies done on the same topic with young children have not been

commensurate. Young children's potential for the development of ethnic identity is evidenced by studies showing the ability of school-age children to exhibit in-group preferences in altruistic behavior (Friesen, Arifovic, Wright, Ludwig, Giamo, & Baray, 2012), as well as 3-5 year olds in showing in-group positivity (Enesco, Lago, Rodriguez, & Guerrero (2011). Phinney (1989) proposed a developmental model of ethnic identity, where individuals move from the childhood state of unexplored identity through an exploration period that culminates in a well-developed ethnic construct in late adolescence. Pre-adolescent ethnic developmental processes provide insight into the exploratory processes and components involved in ethnic identification, particularly for immigrant children (Marks et al., 2007).

### **Research Questions**

A guiding purpose of this study is the exploration of Nigerian immigrant parents' child-rearing practices within the context of their lived experiences as immigrants in an ecological and cultural paradigm that is different from their heritage culture. This study will seek to highlight the environmental influences that interact to generate immigrant families' fluid and dynamic adaptation in a new culture. The adaptation experiences of their young children will also be an area of significant emphasis, in order to explore the developmental trajectory of ethnic identification. Specific questions of interest include: how do Nigerian immigrant parents perceive parenting in the United States relative to their experiences of 'Nigerian' parenting? What negotiations/compromises, if any, are made in their acculturation process? How do these compromises impact child-rearing practices and ideologies? How do the children of these immigrant Nigerian parents perceive the bi-cultural environment that they live in? How do family culture and acculturation dynamics affect young children's ethnic identity development?

And finally, what measures can be taken to better enhance immigrant families' acculturation experience?

## **CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In order to present a reference point for contemporary immigration, this chapter presents background information on: 1) The history of immigration in the United States; 2) a brief overview of African immigration; and finally 3) information on Nigerian immigrants, Nigerian families, and parenting practices. A discussion on factors influencing Nigerian immigrant family acculturation, as well as children's bi-cultural adjustment is contained in the sections on: a) the integration of immigration and acculturation; b) immigrant parenting; c) challenges immigrant families face; and d) the resources they apply to meet these challenges.

### **History of Immigration in the US**

The United States has a long and far reaching history of immigration and adaptation. General perceptions of immigration in the US focus on the contemporary rise in immigrant numbers largely from Asia and Latin America. Less focus is placed on previous eras of immigration and how they contributed to the population increase (at that time) as well as the notion of America as a melting pot of culture and ethnicities. A re-focus on these periods of heightened immigration will reveal similarities in the fundamental motivations that spurred geographical migration as well as the great diversity of the immigrant flow. Factors such as economic benefits, political and social contexts and goals for posterity all played, and still play, a part in decisions to migrate. These factors also influence eventual adaptation for a broad spectrum of people.

### **Colonial America**

Colonial America was a picture of ethnic diversity. With Christopher Columbus' discovery of the New World while searching for an older world, an opportunity arose for Europe to explore economic opportunities as well as reduce the population squeeze that had become part



of everyday life. Inhabitants of the thirteen colonies were of varying ethnic groups. Settlements like Philadelphia consisted of Danes, Dutch, Finns, French, Germans, Irish, Scots, and Swedes (Green, 1965; Sutherland, 1936). Africans made up a large portion of the inhabitants of the Southern colonies. Pennsylvania attracted non-English settlers because of its religious freedom and land expanse; the major inhabitants being of German and Scots-Irish origin (Kettner, 1997; Rolston, 2003). At the close of the colonial period, the non-English population formed the majority of inhabitants with an estimated 53% of the population (Jones, 1995).

Push and pull factors that brought an increase in immigrant numbers included poverty, religious persecution, political advancement, national security concerns, economic growth potential and positive incentives for immigration (Kettner, 1997; Taylor, 2003; Totten, 2008). These same factors remain relevant today. During colonial times, harsh poverty caused individuals and even whole families to resort to various means such as borrowing money or becoming indentured servants in order to acquire passage to the New World (Daniels, 2002). Groups like the Quakers, considered religious dissenters by the Church of England, emigrated to avoid persecution. English trading companies sent out settlers to engage in industry for profit for their shareholders; initial settlers advertized their land in Europe in order to attract more immigrants and profit. Britain, France, Spain and other nations sent their citizens to inhabit various land settlements in the New World as a political venture for acquiring power. (Daniels, 2002). In addition, British jailhouses were emptied into the colonies and African slaves were forcibly transported to the New World (Ekirch, 1987; Shelley & Webster, 1998; Taylor, 2003).

Immigration was considered an avenue for ensuring the security of lands and borders and for the growth of a new nation (Martin, 2003; Totten, 2008). The threat of attacks from Britain, Spain, France, and American Indians inspired the strategic notion that an increase in population,

by immigration, would boost military capabilities and deter invasion from foreign forces.

Immigrants of reasonable wealth were invited to take up residence, in the hopes that a consolidation of wealth and common economic interests would secure the new nation as a place of importance and security among the world polity (Totten, 2008). The idea of a strong centralized government, as well as clauses that addressed liberal naturalization and opportunities for election of immigrants into public offices were included in the Constitution for the purpose of attracting immigrants to populate the nation (Totten, 2008). All these factors that actively encouraged immigration brought an inflow of mostly Northern and Western Europeans who sought new lives in colonial America.

As with contemporary migration, the older inhabitants often viewed the newer immigrants with wariness and distaste, as evidenced by Benjamin Franklin's comments about German immigrants whom he thought "are generally the most stupid of their own nation.... Not being used to liberty they know not how to make modest use of it .... Few of their children know English" (cited in Weaver, 1957, p. 539). This negative perception by the host country's inhabitants did not deter some of the ethnic groups that migrated to the New World from maintaining their heritage culture, ethnic identity, and language. Dutch immigrants maintained their language and ethnic roots in colonial America, and Germans and Scots-Irish continued with their linguistic and cultural traditions even though they were surrounded by the predominant Anglo-Saxon neighbors (Jones, 1995). This diversity significantly contributed to the push for independence from England; immigrant settlers who did not have strong ties to their mother colony propelled the movement for independence and republicanism. The significance of the role played by foreigners in the creation of an independent United States is portrayed in the composition of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, of whom 18 were not of

English strain and therefore ‘foreign born’ (Schlesinger, 1921). This coming together of diverse peoples, together with the adoption of a majority rule paradigm, promoted the governing ideal of democracy and became fundamental to the existence of the American State (Totten, 2008).

### **U.S. Immigration: 1840-1889**

Over 14 million immigrants came to America between 1840-1889, the bulk of whom originated from the Northern and Western countries of Ireland, Germany, the UK, and France (Murtin & Viarengo, 2010; Pew Research, 2013). It is proposed that pull factors encouraging immigration included land availability and the reduced cost of transportation (Murtin & Viarengo; Taylor, 2003). Europe’s population explosion, religious strife, and political upheavals such as the Revolution of 1848 also motivated immigration. Of particular reference is the great number of German and Irish immigrants, spurred to relocate as a result of a severe potato famine (Stave, 2010). Irish and German settlers moved towards regions more suited to their preferred mode of productivity; Germans to agriculture and the Irish to construction. During the Civil War, the foreign born constituted a large segment of soldiers (Keller, 2009). After the Civil War, immigrant streams were notably from Southern and Eastern Europe (Pew Research, 2013).

### **U.S. Immigration: 1880-1920**

During the forty year period from 1880-1920 the vast majority of immigrants to the United States came from Southern and Eastern Europe. Immigrants came from Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Russia (Murtin & Viarengo, 2010; Schlesinger, 1921) in response to opportunities from America’s industrial revolution (Hirschman & Mogford, 2009). With industries and manufacturing plants replacing farm lands, the need for workers was met by the massive flow of immigrants (Hirschman & Mogford, 2009). Near the end of this period, refugees of World War I also sought entry into the US, leading to a push in Congress for restrictive legislation delineating

the limits of immigration. The 1921 Quota Act was enacted and only allowed entry to the equivalent of 3% of the foreign born population residing in the US at that time (Ngai, 2007).

### **U.S Immigration: 1965-present**

Immigration numbers surged following Congress' enactment of the Nationality and Immigration Act (1965), allowing the exemption of family members from nation quotas for visa allocations. The current immigration wave indicates a decline in European immigration and a substantial rise in immigration from other parts of the world. High volumes come from Latin America and South/East Asia with 53% and 28% respectively, of total immigrants. Europe (12%), Canada (2%), Africa/Middle East (7%) also form part of this immigration wave. Broken down by country, Mexico has the highest number of immigrants (28%) followed by China (6%). Much like the immigrants of previous waves, contemporary immigrants came for economic and personal advancement (Espenshade, 1995), as well as to escape political oppression, as is the case for immigrants and refugees from communist nations (Daniels, 2002; McBride, 1999). Host country indices facilitating the immigrant inflow include a declining native fertility, future labor needs and an aging population (Dorsey & Diaz-Barriga, 2007).

### **U.S. Immigration from Africa**

African immigration has garnered increased research because of the increased rate of international migration (Capps et al., 2011; Immigration Policy Center, 2012). Immigration flow after 1965 due to the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act increased from 80,143 to 881,300 between 1970 and 2000 (Gibson & Jung, 2006). Currently, African immigrants constitute 4% out of the total 13% foreign-born population in the US (U.S. Census, 2012). Initially, immigrants from Africa came mostly as students with minimal plans for permanent residency, or as refugees fleeing dangerous and life threatening living conditions (Andemariam,

2007; Takougang & Tidjani, 2009). Today, a growing number of African immigrants come looking for professional advancement and improved opportunities. This increased desire for residency is evident in the 200% increase in African immigration between 2000 and 2010, as well as the 46.1% naturalized African immigrants, compared to 43.7% of the total foreign-born population (Immigration Policy Center, 2012). Increased African immigration is attributable to the 1986 Immigration and Reform Act (IRCA) which made it easier for students and professionals to remain in the US, as well as the institution of the Diversity Lottery program in 1990 to encourage immigration from under-represented regions (Capps et al., 2011; Takyi, 2002). Of special note is the post 1990 African immigration, which grew from 363,819 to 881,300 (Gibson & Jung, 2006). Factors instigating a ‘push’ for immigration have included deteriorating socio-economic conditions in African nations, political instability in the largely post-colonial nations, and educational opportunities (Takougang & Tidjani, 2009; Takyi, 2002). African immigrants are generally well educated, English proficient, and a majority originates from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya (Immigration Policy Center, 2012; Kaba, 2011; Takyi, 2002).

### **Nigerian Immigrants**

The most populous nation of the African continent, Nigeria is sometimes referred to as the “Giant of Africa”. With a current estimated population of over 170 million, an area slightly more than twice the size of California (CIA World Factbook, 2013), the second most important military power in the region, a substantial supply of human and natural resources, as well as a dominant presence and engagement over the affairs of the continent, Nigeria is affluent and influential within the region (Adigbuo, 2008; Bach, 2007). Nigeria is imbued with various natural resources including arable land, petroleum, natural gases, tin, iron ore, coal, limestone,

niobium, lead, and zinc. From colonial times until the 1970s, Nigeria's economic affluence was enabled by a diverse exploration of agriculture, coal, tin, and iron ore; however, the oil boom of the 1970s brought a shortsighted dependence on the oil industry (Walker, 2000).

The oil industry was both a blessing and a burden. With natural gas resources trumping all the other natural resources in term of economic returns, recurrent military and civilian leadership acquired and mismanaged the national wealth to the great detriment of the people (Idemudia, 2012). Political instability, ethnic and religious mistrust, and institutional failures both contributed to, and resulted from a depletion of the country's wealth, a social ideology of self-preservation, and widespread corruption in government (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2011). Resultant economic stagnation, diminished industrialization and limited educational opportunities contributed to the ongoing brain drain that commenced in the 1980s. During the 1980s, Nigerian immigrants made up 37% of all Black African immigrants (Capps et al., 2011). This number has since fallen to 19% as at 2009 (Capps et al., 2011).

In order to address Nigerian immigrant adjustment and parenting in the US, it is crucial to provide pre-migration experiences. While an in-depth review of the culture and people of Nigeria is not within the scope of this study, a general sketch or survey will be provided of Nigerian socio-political life and culture. There are 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, with seven groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, and Tiv) as the larger and more influential groups. Nigerians speak English as the official language, but also have over 500 additional languages (CIA World Factbook, 2013; Coleman, 2009). Nigerian political history consists of British colonial rule from 1914 (the year of amalgamation into a Nigerian nation) until 1960 (the year of independence). Sectarian politics, religious/ethnic differences, and economic mismanagement brought about an era of military rule. Different military juntas, under the

‘righteous’ proclamation of corruption in government, instigated one coup d’état after another to seize power. Frequent power changes and oppressive military rule served to demoralize the nation. Government officials abandoned their obligations to provide stable governance and national growth, and instead proceeded to acquire as much of the ‘national cake’ or national wealth as possible, with little thought to the posterity and growth of the nation as a whole. Nepotism was common, and sectarian politics resulted in certain parts of the nation acquiring infrastructural development, economic growth and political power while others parts did not. Historical tensions that existed between the northern Hausa/Fulani, the western Yoruba and the eastern Igbos culminated in a secessionist attempt by the Igbos from the Nigerian nation. The famously decried Biafran war of 1967-1970 brought to a head civil unrest and national disillusion regarding the feasibility of a unified Nigeria. With the defeat of the Biafran state, the nation has been, and continues to be on the path to potential ethnic and national unity. After twenty eight years (out of the nation’s fifty years of political history) of military rule (Abdulkadir et al., 2012), the transition to a democratically elected and civilian led government was made in 1999 and has been sustained since then (Singh, 2011).

### **Nigerian Families and Parenting Practices**

Overall, Nigerian families tend to be large and extended, as per cultural expectations and for economic and social prestige reasons. On average, a Nigerian woman will have five children during her childbearing years (UNICEF, 2013). Traditionalists (proponents of pre-colonial and pre-Christian times) and Muslims endorse polygamy and will usually have large households (Heaton & Darkwah, 2011; Heaton & Hirschl, 1999; Sadiq, Tolhurst, Laloo, & Theobald, 2010). Nigerian families generally endorse a patriarchal system (Heaton & Hirschl, 1999). Religious and traditional systems have institutionalized the roles of family members; fathers are bread

winners, mothers are nurturers and homemakers, and children are to obey and respect their parents. Global and national economic trends have contributed to role modifications however, particularly for women, who are increasingly represented in the workforce (Heaton & Hirschl, 1999).

Rapid urbanization has had developmental effects on the family. From the period of the oil boom in the 1970s, there has been rapid urbanization from rural to urban areas; in 1974, 75% of the population lived in the rural areas where agriculture was the primary mode of economic growth (Aworemi, Abdul-Azeez, & Opoola, 2011). By 2001, 44% of the population resided in urban cities (Aworemi et al., 2011). Urbanization and its attendant challenges of poverty, unemployment, housing, crime, environmental decline, and food insecurity (an exodus of potential farmers to urban areas brought food shortages and inflation of food prices), brought, and continue to bring challenges to family structure and function (Oke, 1986).

Although there are roughly 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, virtually all generally endorse certain family values and culturally prescribed familial expectations. Three ethnic groups-- Yoruba, Igbo, and Ibibio-- will be considered in order to extract underlying social and cultural family values. All ethnic groups in Nigeria adhere to a patri-lineal kinship relationship (Ekong, 1986), and male dominance is the over-arching paradigm of family dynamics (Saddiq et al., 2010). Kinship is extended; family does not consist merely of the nuclear unit of father, mother, and children; but instead includes cousins, aunts, uncles, and other relatives. The Yoruba concept of *idile* ('root house') represents a fundamental kinship connection (Ekong, 1986). In villages, the family dwelling consists of a compound with houses arranged in a close cluster, and members living in close proximity to cousins, aunts and uncles. This compound becomes a unit of social and economic unity and an enlarged micro-system of development. For the Igbo, the



concept of *Ezi n'ulo* represents a kinship bond without consideration of spatial proximity; the nuclear and extended family is dependent upon and responsible for each other whether or not they live together in a compound. Kinsmen, however distant, are treated and expected to behave as siblings from the same parents. Belonging to a kinship group involves caring for and being responsible for one another, sharing material resource flows, and giving affection (Alber, Haberlein, & Martin, 2010). For the Ibibio, there is no indigenous term for nuclear family (Ekong, 1986). *Ifok-Ekpuk* represents an extended family network and is a term for family house where those of the same lineage dwell.

Child rearing is jointly shared within the kinship network. A popular saying among the Igbo, "*ora n'azu nwa*" (translated to mean 'the community raises the child') embodies the notion that children are a communal responsibility, and a child is answerable to any elder or any older adult (Hron, 2008). Children are generally thought of as belonging to, not only their biological parents, but the kinship group. Consequently, child fosterage exists as a traditional practice among a lineage group where children are raised by a relative other than their biological parents (Alber et al., 2010; Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985). Fosterage occurs for economic, educational, or socialization reasons; parents might send their children to a wealthier relative to obtain an education, or they could be sent to grandparents to be taught customs and traditions. Fostering is especially beneficial for working and new mothers; the former are able to have childcare challenges resolved through the lineage network, and the latter can take in or foster a relative's child who can help her 'mind' the baby at home. Urbanization and migration (national and international) has not dramatically changed this phenomenon of fosterage within kinship networks in Nigeria, but migration to a distant country, like America, can sever the social, emotional, economic, and logistic support of a Nigerian family.

Child development, in Nigeria and the larger context of West Africa, is adult-centric; the child is perceived as subject to the purposes set by adult family/kinship members (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Okoli & Cree, 2012). This authoritarian view is in contrast to Western orientation of child development which tends to be more authoritative and child oriented, where the needs, inclinations, and propensities of the child tends to take first consideration (Cheah et al., 2013; Meng, 2012; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011).

Respect is a significant expectation for Nigerian children; they are expected to greet elders or ‘seniors’ first, with seniority determined by age, social, educational and/or marital status, and it is considered rude behavior to interrupt or contradict an adult (Ohuche, 1986). Nigerian children are trained to value the needs of the family above theirs; children are assigned the responsibility of helping out in the family business or trade, at the farm, caring for younger siblings, running household errands, and dutifully representing the family by displaying respectful, and culturally appropriate behavior so as not to bring shame to the family (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Ekong, 1986; Ogunnaike & Houser, 2002; Okoli & Cree, 2012).

Immigration presents challenges of raising children to adhere to Nigerian cultural expectations in a society with divergent views on child development. Nigerian families have been known to send their young children ‘back home’ to be raised by extended kin, in a bid to ensure they are trained in the traditional cultural expectations for children (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011). As with other immigrants from cultures dissimilar to Western or American parenting culture, Nigerian immigrants subscribe to ethnic support groups in order to find culturally suitable child-rearing or child-care resources. Within the United States there are over 100 registered associations of Nigerians (Motherland Nigeria, 2013). Members get together regularly to celebrate Nigerian holidays like Independence Day or New Yam festival, organize fundraisers

for charitable and humanitarian projects back home, assist individual members in cases of family loss or illness, and also organize language learning classes or play groups for members' children (Reynolds, 2009; Ukaoma, 2011). This study seeks to explore how parents' culture of origin contributes to the parenting goals of Nigerian immigrant parents, and also the unique strategies parents employ to negotiate a Nigerian identity for their young children in the United States.

### Immigration and Acculturation

For immigrants in a new country, the context of reception (how they are received by the host country; the experiences they have with immigration officials, housing, employment, neighborhood and community) play a part in their continuing adjustment. An interactional matrix of response patterns that occur based on negative or positive interactions between immigrants and the host society is proposed by Berry (2001) and diagramed below:

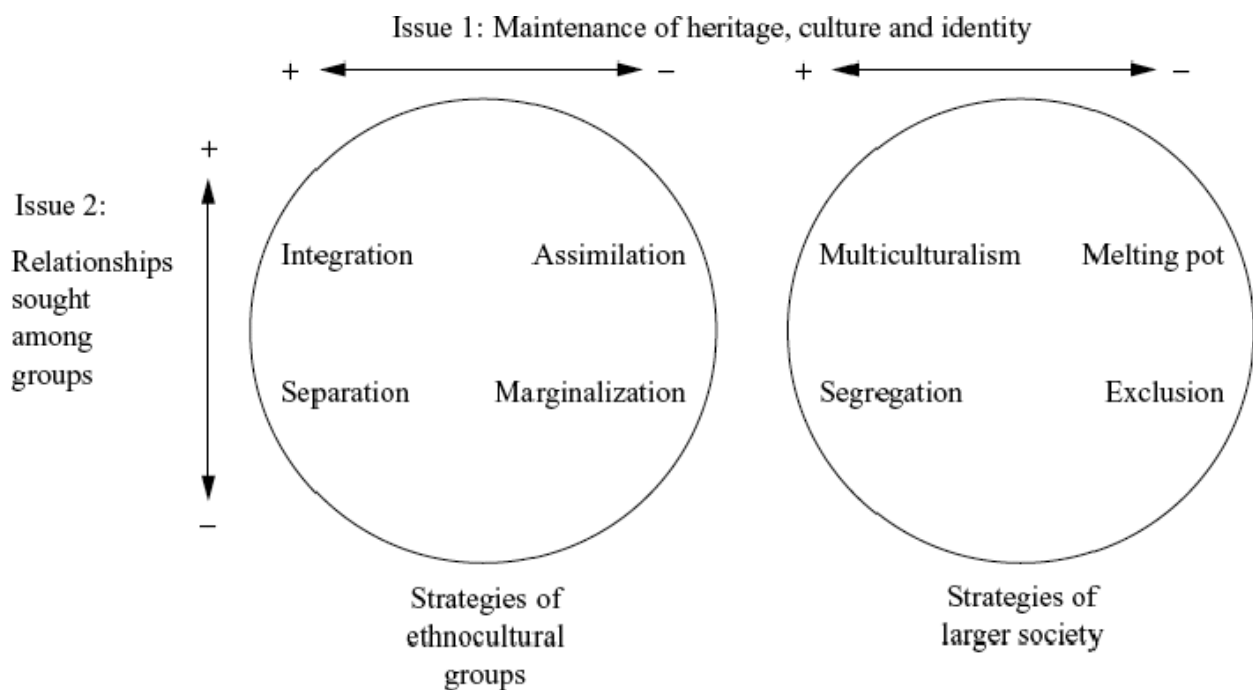


Fig. 1: Varieties of intercultural strategies among immigrant groups and in the receiving society. Source: Berry, 2001, p. 618. Reprinted with permission via e-mail from author.

Berry (2001) proposed that host societies more accepting of pluralism and diversity exhibit a *multicultural* ideology, and that immigrants in this environment tend to choose an integration acculturation strategy. Multiculturalism is evident in structural level policies (multicultural curricula, institutionalized language diversity), demographic integration (e.g., mixed marriages and inter-ethnic student enrollment), and social diversity (multicultural cuisine). Where immigrants are encouraged, through public and political rhetoric, immigration laws and societal behaviors or attitudes, to assimilate to the larger social culture, a *melting pot* ideology is attributed. Host society attitudes that reject multiculturalism and provide limited opportunities for immigrant inclusion and integration denote *segregation* and *exclusion* attitudes. Immigrants in these settings typically lean towards separation and marginalization strategies. These host society attitudes towards immigrants arise, in large part, from the country's history of and goals for immigration. Canada, for instance, adopted a national policy of multiculturalism as a solution to the rising ethnic and political tensions between the English and the French (Wood & Gilbert, 2005). Immigrants are often viewed in a negative or derogatory light, especially if there are obvious cultural differences between the immigrant group and the mainstream (Phinney, Horenzcyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). By applying an ecological perspective to immigrants' perception of acceptance or rejection, the proposed study aims to explore the influence of context of reception on Nigerian immigrant families' adaptation and parenting.

An acculturation framework reveals three essential components of immigrant cultural adaptation: culture, language, and ethnic identity. Culture has been defined in various ways, however, the underlying concept is one of shared meaning, ascribed by a group of people (Schwartz et al., 2010). Broesch and Hadley (2012) define culture as information on norms, values and beliefs acquired from others and capable of affecting behavior. This information is

socially transmitted and is organized around domains such as diet, dress, or religion. These domain clusters are referred to as a cultural model. The idea of cultural domains delivers an important point; that culture is not a monolithic whole. Within a particular cultural context there can, and do exist intra-cultural differences in the adherence to cultural domains. A relevant example is the sectional divisions of an over-arching Christian faith into Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, and other denominations. In the same way that individuals can ‘acculturate’ to specific sub-faiths within a larger one, so also can immigrants acculturate to specific cultural domains within host society culture. As a parallel to the earlier noted concept of ecological contexts of acculturation, a domain-specific acculturation concept aptly identifies this propensity to use different strategies in different settings.

In order to understand the integrated nature of acculturation, the socio-cultural models of pre-migration need to be acknowledged and compared with post-migration cultural influences. Differences in cultural models between the heritage and host country determine the cultural distance that has to be bridged (Babiker, Cox, Miller, 1980; Berry, 1997). The greater the resemblance between host and heritage groups (e.g., language, educational and dietary congruence), the easier the acculturation process. American immigrants to Canada, for instance, would have little to acculturate to since there is minimal cultural distance. However, immigrants from Iran to Canada would experience divergent values, norms, and language, leading to increased cultural distance and the need for psychological adjustment through sub-processes identified as *culture shedding*, and *culture learning* (Berry, 1992). Culture shedding and learning occur together as a joint process that involves an unintentional loss of behaviors and values in order to acquire new ones that allow a better fit in the new culture. (Berry, 1997; Georgas et al., 1996). Cultural distance has been subjectively measured and implicated in socio-

cultural adjustment, as in the study of Chinese graduate students' socio-cultural adjustment to Korean host society (Kwon, 2013). The Chinese graduate students reported differences in social interaction, decorum, teaching style and language proficiency as contributors to socio-cultural adjustment stress.

Language is an index of socio-cultural information (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). It is an aspect of shared cultural identity within a group (Tannebaum, 2009; Tingvold et al., 2012). Language is at once a medium and an endpoint of socialization (Scheifelin & Ochs, 1986). Borrowing from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, language learning between an individual and a more knowledgeable other allows for the communicative use of language as well as the teaching of cultural dispositions through language. Inter-psychoic language or speech interactions become intra-psychoic processes (Vygotsky, 1962). Individuals are socialized through and into language in order to become competent members of their socio-cultural world. By acquiring knowledge of how, why, where, and when to use language forms, individuals become socialized into their cultural group and language serves as an ethnic identity guide (Mucherah, 2008; Schiefelin & Ochs, 1986). Language forms that convey assertiveness, individualism, and independence contribute to an American cultural ideology; as distinct from submissiveness, co-dependence, and communalism found in the language forms and culture of China (Kwon, 2013; Shi, 2010). First generation Mexican immigrant parents prefer for their children to speak Spanish as the primary language most likely in an attempt to socialize children into culturally valued norms of 'respeto' and interdependence (Buriel, 2012).

Identity is the understanding and acceptance of both the self and one's society (Miller, 1993, p. 159). Erikson (1959) defined identity as "a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity" (p. 102). Ethnic identity can therefore be inferred to mean an

understanding and acceptance of the self within the locus of an ethnic group. Ethnic identity is an affect-laden concept and encompasses such aspects as self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, and a sense of shared values and attitudes towards one's own ethnic group (Phinney et al., 2001).

With migration comes a loss of cultural 'references' upon which conceptual images and understandings are built. Immigrants become more acutely aware of their ethnic identity when dislocated from their heritage homes. Those who held ethnic majority status pre-migration may become relegated to a minority status in the new nation, leading to potential adjustment stresses that may affect acculturation. A related example involves the case of Chinese Buddhists in America. While a dominant group in their heritage country, migration to the U.S. brought adaptation challenges to their ethnic/religious identity as a group, and their efforts at assimilation included making provisions to 'Americanize' aspects of their religion (e.g., beliefs, practices and organizational structure), recruiting non-Chinese leaders, and integrating into religious associations (Fenggang & Ebaugh, 2001). Identification with one's ethnic group mediates acculturative stresses that might emanate from a re-definition of one's ethnic identity (Yoon et al., 2012). Ethnic identity is a salient component of the acculturation framework as it is one of the factors that impact choice of acculturation strategy (Phinney et al., 2001). Just as with acculturation, two issues are salient with ethnic identity; the value of identifying with one's cultural ethnic group and that of adopting a national or host society identity. In strategies parallel with acculturation, ethnic identity can be bi-cultural or integrated where the individual identifies with both groups; it can be assimilated, indicating national but not ethnic identity; it can be separated, referring to ethnic but not national identity; or ethnic identity can be marginalized, manifesting a dis-inclination to either identities (Phinney et al., 2001).

Culture, language, and ethnic identity are uniquely inter-linked in both macro- and micro-sociological creations of an immigrant personality. Immigrants' culture and language bond together in the creation of an ethnic identity that is similar, yet distinct from that previously held in the heritage country. Using food as a cultural index, African and Asian immigrant women showed their self-identification with heritage culture foods by their description of cultural foods as 'our food' or 'we eat', while host country foods are referred to as 'their food' or 'they eat' (Garnweidner et al., 2012). Sub-Saharan immigrants in Australia reported maintaining heritage country cultural dietary norms while adopting some host country food choices and practices (Renzaho & Burns, 2006). A large sub-set of the population sampled (86%), indicated that lunch is the heaviest and more formal eating period, consistent with heritage culture but different from the Australian culture of dinner as the heaviest meal. Substitutions were made for heritage-country staple foods that were unavailable in Australia. A section of the sampled population (38%) indicated that they ate fast food/pizza/takeaway because of its convenience, and also because of the difficulties sometimes encountered in obtaining indigenous food. Dietary changes are also indicative of gender role modifications as women are traditionally expected to cook all meals. The greater incidence of immigrant women working outside the home contributes to decisions to acculturate to the host country's diet (Bowen and Devine, 2011). These dietary modifications, in the face of cultural differences within the host country, are proposed to impact ethnic identity by facilitating the creation of multiple identities as a response to contextual food resources available (Chapman & Beagan, 2013). Immigrants therefore undergo changes in the self-conceptions of who they are apart from the ethnic culture frame of reference and within a new or different culture.



## **Immigrant Parenting**

Within an ecological systems perspective, the parent's role in the matrix of child x environment systems is one of guidance and facilitation. Particularly for immigrant children, their encounters with the nested ecological systems are guided and facilitated by parental characteristics like beliefs, values, and immigration goals (Amayo, 2009; Bledsoe & Sow, 2011). This role is challenged if parents feel ineffective in their authority due to language, acculturation, or other challenges. Immigrant parents often feel uncertain about socializing, interacting, and communicating with their children due to language difficulties and lack of familiarity with American culture (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011; Qin, 2006); an uncertainty that could lead to unsupportive parenting and subsequent maladjustment (Costigan & Koryzma, 2011; Kim et al., 2013).

Cultural frame of reference and cultural distance play key roles in immigrant parenting practices and effects. Parenting practices learned from the pre-migration culture of origin tend to be maintained post-migration, especially if migration occurred during adulthood or older adolescence (Glick, Hanish, Yabiku, & Bradley, 2012). Pre-migration cultural frame of reference therefore informs parenting style and practices (Rasmussen, Akinsulure-Smith, Chu, & Keatley, 2012). For instance, Chinese immigrants' parenting style is informed by cultural beliefs in filial duty, obedience, hard work, and family honor as requirements for producing a functional member of the community (Guo, 2013). Cultural distance underlies the incidence of dissonant acculturation between immigrant parents and their children; the greater the perceived cultural difference, the more challenging it is for parents to acculturate compared to their children (Babiker et al., 1980; Kim et al., 2013). Parents and adolescents with dissonant acculturation to American culture exhibit more conflict than those without, a possible reason being that parents

find it hard to understand their children's adaptation challenges and strategies in the new culture (Kim et al., 2013).

Parenting is culturally constructed (Harkness & Super, 2002). The socio-ecological backdrop of culture provides support for parenting practices and values, while extended family, the community and the culture at large reiterate socialization values and practices. Families transposed to a backdrop different from their origin loose socio-ecological support and face the challenges and choices of adjustment. For parents who move from a collectivistic to an individualistic culture, the challenge becomes implementing pre-migration parenting ideas within a host culture that might not support it. For example, one research study found that Turkish collectivistic culture expects obedience, interdependence, and the valuing of other's needs over one's own. This elicits controlling, inhibiting, and authoritarian parenting behaviors with little emphasis on child autonomy and independence (Yaman, Mesman, & van IJzendoorn, 2010). In contrast, individualistic cultures that promote exploration, independence, and negotiation will place less emphasis on strict obedience and apply verbal reasoning, induction, and more authoritative parenting in order to encourage stated socialization goals (Cheah et al., 2013). The research-evidenced contrast between divergent cultures indicates limited support for collectivist families and parenting behaviors within an individualist culture, and vice versa. In related research, West African immigrant parents have expressed disappointment with state-mandated policies inhibiting their use of culturally prescribed corporal punishment to discipline their children, leading to cultural conflict, and loss of authority and respect within the home (Rasmussen et al., 2012).

In instances where migrants move from a collectivistic culture, to an individualistic one (China to the U.S. for instance), the acculturation strategy chosen tends to influence parenting

style and practices. Parents who orient towards an integrated style dually engage in culture shedding and learning to combine heritage culture practices with host culture norms of parenting (Yaman et al., 2010). A relevant example is a study of changing parenting values and practices among a group of first-generation Chinese immigrant mothers with young children. With increased length of stay, mothers revealed that their parenting values and behaviors changed from restrictive, over-protective parenting, and over-emphasis on academic achievement to a more moderate approach. Their adoption of some host country values and practices led to an increased use of reasoning and guidance, provision for autonomy and independence, and a greater focus on fostering self-esteem, social, moral and personality development (Cheah et al., 2013). The mothers in the study did not switch out one cultural paradigm for another; instead, they endorsed certain aspects of parenting from both cultures, and created a balance that would help them accomplish the goal of facilitating their children's optimum adaptation with the new socio-cultural milieu. Further, Farver and Yoolim (2000) propose that integrated Korean-American mothers do not manifest a seamless blend of bicultural parenting, but a compartmentalization of 'Korean-like' and 'American-like' behaviors. This choice of domains to maintain or integrate is indicative of the choices immigrant parents make frequently, in their everyday lived experiences, to accomplish socialization and parenting goals.

### **Challenges Immigrant Families Face**

Immigrant families are simultaneously homogenous and heterogeneous (Suarez-Orozco and Carhill, 2008). Entry into a host country identifies a vast array of occupationally, ethnically, and socio-culturally diverse individuals and families with the sole classification of 'immigrant'. This heterogeneity and the context of reception within the host country contribute to the challenges experienced (Haller & Landolt, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Immigrants' legal

status, for instance, differentiates one individual/family from the other and contributes to the degree and type of challenges experienced. Noted challenges faced by immigrants include language, employment, navigating the system, disrupted family dynamics, inadequate childcare, immigration status, expectations versus reality, and discrimination. For further consideration, these challenges will be grouped into three overarching groups that include one or more challenges listed.

**Language-** Language differences internal or external to the family threaten the shared meanings and cohesion of immigrant families (Calzada, Huang, Anicama, Fernandez, & Brotman, 2012; Portes & Hao, 2002). Immigrant parents with limited English fluency come to depend on individuals external to the family or a child language broker, if available (Morales, Yakushko, & Castro, 2011). Intergenerational dissonance in language fluency, as well as parents' dependence on their children for interaction with the host society can bring about feelings of role reversal, diminished parental authority, parent-child conflict, and compromised family cohesion (Schofield, Beaumont, Widaman, & Jochem, 2012). Even parents who are fluent in the host country language might still be unfamiliar with contextual subtleties and language conventions used in the new community, making language use for communication purposes an arduous task. Language difficulties mediate a lot of other challenges immigrants face (Stewart et al., 2008), examples being employment, navigating the system, and child care access.

**Family issues-** Children and parents typically acculturate at a different rate and degree (Ho, 2010). While the general direction of parent-child acculturation research indicates that children tend to acculturate to the host culture faster, and more significantly than their parents (Bahrassa et al., 2013), some other studies indicate otherwise. Ho (2010) and Lim et al. (2009) report that children have shown higher values of acculturation to their ethnic identity than their

parents. One assumption for this is that parents seek to acquire the perceived benefits of host culture acculturation (Nesdale, 2002), while adolescents seek to establish their unique ethnic identity, as well as ensure optimum adaptation by adopting a bi-cultural orientation (Ho, 2008).

Consonant acculturation occurs when parents and children acculturate at a relatively similar pace, while dissonant acculturation is the opposite (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The latter form results in acculturation gaps, which occur because first generation parents come with the values, behaviors, and expectations of the heritage country, while their children are quicker to become immersed in host country culture and processes through school and social interactions (Dasgupta, 1998; Tingvold et al., 2012). Acculturation gaps have been found to be mediated by a communication breakdown between immigrant parents and their children (Kim & Park, 2011; Schofield et al., 2012). Further, acculturation gaps have been correlated with children's maladjustment, adolescent mental health, delinquency, negative academic trajectories, and parent-child conflicts (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Kim et al., 2013; Updegraff et al., 2012; & Wang et al., 2012). Separation from extended family and kin brings about feelings of isolation, and makes it hard to find support for child care, employment, and emotional wellbeing (Ornelas, Perreira, Beeber, & Maxwell, 2009). Immigration can also bring gender role and marital conflicts initiated by the prevalence (in the U.S.) of more egalitarian expectations for male and female participation in the workforce and the home (Shirpak, Tyndale, & Chinichian, 2011; Yu, 2011). Men from more traditional and patriarchal cultures struggle with the greater freedoms allowed women in the host countries, increasing the risk for conflict, aggression, and relationship dissatisfaction (Falconier, 2013).

**Economic Stressors-** In 2009, the total percentage of non-US citizen families living below poverty was 26% vs.9% for native families; total non US citizen adults 18-64 years old

living below poverty was 26.9% vs. 13.7% of native citizens; and a third of immigrant children (18 and under) lived in poverty; 37.7% vs. 20.6%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The incidence of poverty is more acute among immigrants, particularly among recent immigrants who have not had time to adjust to the new environment (de Bustillo & Anton, 2011; Takei & Sakamoto, 2011). Immigrants often perceive poverty to be the product of institutionalized discrimination, prejudice, and racism when it comes to employment and housing opportunities (Phillimore, 2011; Stewart et al., 2008). Ramirez and Villarejo (2012) document antecedent laws and labor related practices that entrenched discriminatory employment and housing practices in California. They posit that the practice of worker segregation in the San Joaquin Valley was a consequence of a long history of exploitation of immigrants as cheap sources of labor. Poverty augments risk factors and gives rise to lack of institutional resources, segmented social interactions, and adverse neighborhood contexts. Poverty also impacts school and childcare choices, and reduces access to health insurance (Yesil-Dagli, 2011).

Immigrant families vary in how they address these stressors. An ABC-X model of family stress (Hill, 1949) identifies the components of adjustment to stress as: *A* being family stressors, *B* resources available and *C* perception or definition of the stressful situation. Pertinent to immigrant families is the *C*-perception component; the way that an immigrant family perceives the stress, either as a means to an end or a hopeless situation, determines how they react to it. Immigrant families have been shown to include immigration motivations as part of family narrative to remind them of why they came, and to press on to accomplish that goal (family immigration and academic achievement article). Narratives such as “it is better to .... than to ....” are cognitive rationalizations families engage in to adjust to the challenges faced in a new country. Challenges and stressors are weighed relative to migration goals and this cross-cultural

perspective helps with adjustment to stress. Anecdotal evidence indicates that Nigerian immigrants who emigrate from a socio-political climate of instability, structural nepotism, and economic fluctuations adopt such narratives to combat adverse conditions and acculturative challenges in the U.S.

### **Immigrant Family Resources**

Resources available for handling challenging experiences and conditions include pre-migration cultural traits (like family cohesion, religion, family values), English language proficiency, human and economic capital, familiarity with host country norms, social networks, and community resources (Beckhusen et al., 2013; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Feliciano, 2006; Marsiglia et al., 2009; Ornelas et al., 2009; Rivera et al., 2008; Stewart et al., 2008).

Pre-migration cultural traits can serve as a launch pad for immigrant adaptation. Cultural traits like filial duty, obedience, hard work, and family honor are held by Chinese immigrants, and have been identified as one of the reasons for Chinese immigrants' relatively more positive adaptation (Guo, 2013). The pre-migration factors of human (education, professional, and social skills) and economic capital also play a significant role in immigrant adaptation. Immigrants who arrive with educational and occupational skills applicable in, and desired by the host nation tend to experience more positive reception from the host society (Rumbaut, 2008). A comparison of the Asian and Hispanic immigrant groups reveals the basis of Rumbaut's assertion that the most and the least educated groups in the U.S. are immigrants.

In an attempt to propose a reason for the variations in immigrant adaptation and acculturation, Portes and Feranandez-Kelly (2008) provide an examination of children of immigrants, asserting that the factors that impact their adaptation include parents' human capital characteristics, family structure, and their modes of incorporation. *Modes of incorporation* is

used to identify a three-part concept that influences the different contexts of immigrant reception (Haller & Landolt 2005; Portes & Rumbaut 2001). The contexts of government, society, or community are noted as important mediators of the extent to which immigrants can apply whatever human capital they arrived with in order to facilitate adaptation. A neutral or receptive reception by government policies and institutions, a societal environment that encourages incorporation and opportunity, and the existence of social networks, and community dynamics that encourage co-ethnic interactions all provide opportunities for immigrants to apply their human capital and occupational skills.

Particularly for immigrant families, the presence of an immigrant community, organized around religion or ethnic groups, provides help and support to buffer stress (Berkman & Glass, 2000), and to access resources like employment, healthcare, childcare, transportation and other needs (Anthias & Cederberg, 2009). Immigrant communities can also provide language learning classes, mentors, and same-group peer interactions; or just the ambience of familiarity to help with adjustment. These immigrant communities are crucial in establishing and maintaining a migration network within the host nation (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Upon attaining a status of relative capability, some immigrant families send for other family members to join them in the host country, thus creating a bigger community of immigrants to support adjustment.

With increased length of stay comes the ability for immigrants to widen their social networks beyond the immigrant community to include host culture citizens, as well as formal resources (agencies and institutions) in order to obtain needed resources (Ornelas et al. 2009; Stewart et al., 2008). In a study on undocumented Latino immigrants, Ayon and Naddy (2013) reported that immigrant families obtained support from the extended family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and community agencies. These scholars noted, however, that participant



immigrants tended to be homophilious in their support seeking behaviors, homophily being the tendency to bond with people similar to oneself (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001).

Homophilious links, however, have the tendency to create limited social networks with limited information diffusion and interactions, a situation with the potential to limit immigrant adaptation (McPherson et al., 2001).

Immigrants' length of stay in the host country also facilitates language proficiency and familiarity with the host country norms to enable adaptation (Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009). With initial immigration comes a sense of unfamiliarity with the host country, especially if the immigrants have limited host language proficiency. In a study by Kuo & Roysircar (2004), Chinese adolescent immigrants to Canada who were limited in their English language proficiency reported greater acculturative stress. Those who were proficient in the English language before their arrival to Canada experienced more positive acculturation because they had a greater ability to: a) acquire cultural knowledge, b) have greater inter-personal interactions with members of the host country, and c) avoid potential intercultural misunderstandings. In essence, language proficiency acquired prior to or after migration, is a significant predictor of positive adaptation (Kuo & Roysircar, 2004; Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009).

The resources listed above, and others not mentioned due to the heterogeneity of immigrant adaptation choices, are an indication of the resilient quality that immigrant families and individuals apply in their adaptation to the host country (Campbell, 2008; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). This resilience is sometimes informed and characterized by a comparison of quality of life and opportunities in the host country, with life in the country of origin (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). A study on the challenges and strengths of immigrant Latino families, reports one of the respondents as declaring "if we are doing bad here, it is worse in

Mexico” (Rafaelli & Wiley, 2013, p. 364). This resilience is also applied in the hopes of accomplishing pre-migration goals; salient among them being the wellbeing of their children (Ayon & Naddy, 2013).

From the research reviewed above, it is evident that immigrant families experience environmental and psychological upheavals. A choice of acculturation strategy is resultant from the social interactions afforded by their ecological surroundings (Tardif-Williams & Fisher, 2009). These social interactions, and their perceptions of them, are accessible for study, through the use of a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is the study of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). The present study focuses on the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant families within the U.S., and their host country adaptation as it affects parenting practices. Also a point of focus is the lived experience of the young children of these Nigerian immigrant parents, and their bi-cultural adaptation. In-depth personal interviews will be applied to explore these concepts within the context of acculturation strategies, parenting, challenges faced and resources available. The review of literature will serve as a reference point from which participants’ acculturation experiences will be juxtaposed with the experiences of other immigrant groups and individuals. This will allow the identification of similarities and/or unique experiences, and acculturation processes between immigrant groups to further contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon. The method of investigation of these concerns is addressed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHOD**

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the acculturation process of Nigerian immigrant parents and their young children. This chapter will address the qualitative paradigm and its appropriateness for this study, as well as employed qualitative methods, the researcher's role, proposed data sources, and data collection procedures.

### **Qualitative Paradigm**

Qualitative research is contextual (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995; Trochim, 2001). It is especially suited to family research because it acknowledges and emphasizes meanings, the existence of multiple realities within a family, and the socio-psychological, affect-laden context within which knowledge is created (Ambert et al., 1995; Fonow & Cook, 1991). Qualitative methods can provide rich texts, clear examples, and in-depth illustrations that allow researchers to paint a vivid picture of the meanings, motivations and details of family life (Ambert et al., 1995). A large number of studies on immigrant family acculturation have been done using quantitative methods of probability sampling and statistical data analysis. These studies have yielded general results on the salience of acculturation strategies, the effects of an acculturation gap between immigrant parents and their children, ethnic identification, family processes, structure, and functioning that facilitate or challenge acculturation, as well as the ecological influences on the psychological well being of immigrant parents and their children (Dillon, De La Rosa, & Ibanez, 2013; Hiujnk, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2012; Rogers et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2013; Su & Costigan, 2008; Yoon et al., 2012). Qualitative studies, on the same issues stated above, tend to provide in-depth, contextual, and nuanced information on the meanings and dynamic processes involved in immigration and acculturation experiences (Baffoe, 2010, 2011; Kim et al., 2006; Larissa, 2013; Morrison & James, 2009; Ochocka & Janzen, 2008;

Paris, 2008). The present study seeks to explore these meanings and processes among Nigerian immigrant families.

The qualitative paradigm generally entails an inductive approach to knowledge generation. Qualitative researchers frequently strive to address a topic of interest as seen through the eyes of the participant. Detailed narratives are elicited through interviews and shared experiences in order to draw out the meaning ascribed to specific phenomenon. A consideration of the qualitative paradigm implies that a comparison is made with an alternate paradigm, in this case the quantitative paradigm. While the epistemological and methodological differences between both methods have been the focus of intense discourse, this study will only acknowledge that the features of both methods are suited to specific types of research, and the type of data used: quantitative research is typically best suited to studies involving large samples and large amounts of data. Quantitative methods are also better situated for reaching generalizations based on statistical projections. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is better suited to studies that tell the participant's story; provide rich, descriptive detail, and results that engage the human context in reaching and reporting findings (Newman & Benz, 1998; Trochim, 2001). With the in-depth examination of acculturation experiences being the focus of this study, a qualitative methodology seems to better serve to identify relevant themes.

### **Qualitative Methods**

A phenomenological approach was used to address immigrant family acculturation experiences in this study. Phenomenology is the study of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). The underlying epistemological assumption with phenomenology is that people's interpretations of the world are informed by their subjective experiences (Trochim, 2001). As a research approach, phenomenology involves "the description and elucidation of the everyday world in a

way that expands our understanding of the human experience” (Dahlberg, Drew, & Nystrom, 2001, p. 49). In this case, the human experience of focus is acculturation among Nigerian immigrant parents and their children. The existential realities that family members experience in their daily lives is expected to provide rich data on the meanings ascribed to experiences.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants, in order to elicit narrative descriptions of their lived acculturation experiences. Narrative discourse produces stories that center on human actions (Polkinghorne, 1997). Narrative inquiry possesses a Gestalt quality, in which the whole or composite experience or concept is greater than the sum of its interrelated parts. The seemingly distinct stories told by participants sum up to a portrait of the whole. Because a multiplicity of realities provides a more comprehensive perspective, parents as well as their children will be interviewed.

### **Researcher’s Role**

My role, as the researcher, will be to elicit information from the participants during the interview. In line with the qualitative paradigm, I am aware of the influence and potential bias brought by my membership of the group (as a Nigerian immigrant to the U.S. and parent). I am also aware that my role as facilitator does not occur in an interactional vacuum; my facial expressions, body language, and voice have the potential to influence participants’ responses, and the study results as a whole. Reflexivity and critical self-scrutiny are strategies recommended to address the issues stated above (Mason, 2002; Pilnick & Swift, 2010), and which will be used during the process of data collection and analysis. In their conceptualization of Grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990) decried the influence of pre-existing theories in shaping research outcomes. They noted that pre-existing theories would “hinder progress and

stifle creativity” by inhibiting the creation of new theories from observed data (p. 53). My role, therefore, also includes exploring questions and issues beyond the parameters of existing theory.

### **Data Sources**

The data sources used in examining the research question included: a) background information collected through a pre-interview background information questionnaire and b) interviews with the participants. It is important to note that two sensitizing acculturation questions formed the introductory questions for the interviews (see Appendix A). These acculturation questions were not used as a label to situate participants within pre-determined categories. The acculturation theory-based questions were used to guide the analyses and understanding of immigration experiences. The conceptualization of the questions is based on the understanding that theories are a description of generalized human behavior, and are historically and culturally situated (Ezzy, 2002). Acculturation theory is no exception; immigrants’ acculturation behaviors and experiences are situated within the historical and cultural meanings ascribed to them. This study aims to explore the possibly unaddressed nuances and dynamics of those meanings, using acculturation theory as a general compass.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Framework**

In order to encourage the richness of the narrative, and a natural, conversational manner, semi-structured interviews were conducted (Merriam, 1998). Semi-structured interviews enable the facilitation of a *guided conversation* (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), with the flexibility to insert probing, or follow-up questions for further clarification (Draper & Swift, 2011). Interviews conducted with children were guided by transformations in research methods with young children. Previous conceptualizations of children in research involve the notion that children are incapable of having personal ideas, and maintaining constant opinions about ‘adult’ issues (van

Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Children in research have also been conceptualized as lacking in the mental ability required to provide reliable and autonomous responses, distinct from adult pre-categorizations of phenomena. A qualitative research design that utilizes adaptable interviews would best serve children as research participants (Pellegrini, 2010).

The sampling method used is purposive sampling, because it requires that participants who are rich sources of information on the research topic are deliberately selected (Marshall, 1996). Based on the dearth of information on the acculturation experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents and their young children, purposive sampling is an appropriate and effective method of sample selection.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

I conducted personal interviews with 30 Nigerian immigrant parents (15 couples), as well as 15 children (1 child from each family). Following IRB approval (LSU IRB # 3386), the data were collected in the summer and fall of 2014. Participants were Nigerian immigrant parents currently residing in the state of Texas, and who fit the following criteria for participation: 1) married couples with young children between 6-10 years old; 2) first generation immigrants from Nigeria; 3) minimum length of residency in the U.S. of 4 years to ensure familiarity with the culture. The recruitment of participants was done through various means. The initial strategy involved contacting the proprietors of the African markets located in the area. They provided names of the leaders of the local chapter of a Nigerian association group, as well as individuals who fit the criteria or who might know possible participants. As participants were interviewed, they were asked to suggest a referral. Also contacted was an African church with members originating from different countries across Africa. Only Nigerian couples were recruited.

Prior to the interviews, parents filled out informed consent and child assent forms that explained the study and their right to anonymity and optional withdrawal (see Appendix B and C). Additionally, a background information questionnaire was administered to the adult participants prior to the interviews. This questionnaire included information on their age, educational level, occupation, number of years in the U.S., number of years married, income, age and gender of children, and the states that they had lived in while in the United States. After the forms were completed, a semi-structured interview with 19 open ended questions (11 questions for the children) was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at participants' homes (except for one family interview that was conducted in a fast-food restaurant). Both spouses were interviewed together in all but two instances, due to spouses' work and personal schedules. On average, each interview lasted for 60-90 minutes. Children were interviewed in the presence of, and after their parents' interview; their interviews lasted an average of 7 minutes. Participants' identifying information was available only to the investigator and then kept in a secure location upon completion of the study.

All interviews were conducted completely in English, except for one instance where the participant and I shared the same language and there was an infrequent language switch during the interview. I translated her comments into English with consideration for cultural context.

The interview questions for the study were developed based on the review of literature on immigrant parenting and young children's identity development, and suggestions from the members of the dissertation committee during the proposal meeting held in April of 2014. All the comments and suggestions strengthened the interview instrument by helping to avoid leading, repetitive, or irrelevant questions. The interview questions can be found in Appendix D.



## **Participants**

As previously noted, study participants included 30 Nigerian immigrants (15 couples) and 15 children. The participants represented the southern, eastern and western parts of Nigeria. On average, these families had resided in the US for 11 years (range 6-17 years) and all but 2 couples had migrated together. All but 1 of the couples migrated via diversity visa lottery (that couple came on a student visa) and 5 out of the 15 couples had at least 1 child born in Nigeria and the rest in the US.

The average age of the parents was within a 30-40 year range, and for the children it was 7 years. All but 4 of the participants possessed advanced post-graduate degrees-MS/MBA/PhD. The 4 participants had indicated that they had ‘some college’ experience. Two of the post-graduate degrees were obtained in Nigeria, while the rest were obtained in US universities. Participants’ held a wide range of occupations, including customer service representative, social worker, nurse, pharmacist, accountant, electrical engineer and data analyst. Participant couples were dual career couples (2 of the mothers had part-time jobs); combined family income was around \$40,000 for 3 families, around \$60,000 for 6 families, around \$80,000 for 2 families and over \$100,000 for 4 families. Participants’ shared that they have had living experiences in Ohio, Connecticut, California, Oregon, New York, Rhode island, Tennessee, Maryland, Atlanta, and their current location of Texas.

## **Qualitative Research Rigor**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for evaluating the soundness of qualitative studies. Their criteria include *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*. These criteria will be briefly reviewed below.

1. Credibility refers to the degree to which the researcher presents the truth from the point of view of the participant. A qualitative research is considered credible if the descriptions of participants' experience are recognizable by other individuals with similar experiences (Sandelowski, 1986). This study sought credibility by presenting the data using participants' own words, and also by employing a peer debriefing process which will be described later in the chapter.
2. Transferability refers to the degree to which research study findings can be applied to other settings or groups (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012). This research has provided all the details and assumptions made about the participants; information that can be used to ascertain transferability of the findings to other Nigerian immigrant families, or even other immigrant families of different nationality.
3. Dependability refers to the degree to which the research instrument is accurate across time. Essentially it is concerned with whether one would obtain the same results if measured twice. Although no two research situations can be exactly the same, this study sought to show dependability by using an instrument developed from previous research findings and with input from the dissertation committee. In the course of the semi-structured interviews, some clarifying questions were asked, however, the 19-question interview served as a constant framework of inquiry.
4. Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data reflects participants' perspectives and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is the attempt to achieve what, in quantitative parlance, would be termed 'objectivity'. As there is no such thing as a totally objective social researcher (Slife & Williams, 1995), a discussion on reflexivity would

prove useful, and this will be provided below. In any case, this study sought confirmability by providing rich quotes from the participants to help conceptualize the various themes developed.

5. Reflexivity refers to the continuous process of self reflection that researchers engage in to generate awareness about their feelings and perceptions (Hughes, 2014), and how their biases might affect the research in data collection, analyses and findings. It is especially important to disclose if the researcher is a member of the group under study, and that is the case in the current study. I was born and raised in Nigeria, immigrated to the United States as an adult and am married to a Nigerian immigrant. We are both parents in this new host culture and are familiar with some of the experiences that have been shared by the parent participants in the study. We both have post-graduate degrees but, while mine was obtained in the US, my husband's was not. My educational experience has enabled a closer encounter with the history and norms of family and parenting issues in the US, allowing me to reflect on and evaluate the qualities of contrasting parenting styles and familial obligations. This sensitivity to some of the challenges facing immigrant parents adds further depth to the data analysis, as well as the degree to which participants were accepting of my inquiry into their experiences and perceptions.

Having briefly addressed the components of rigorous qualitative research rigor, this chapter will conclude with an account of the data analysis used in this study.

## **Data Analysis**

In adoption of inductive theory building and grounded theory methods (Ezzy, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), data collection and analysis was conducted simultaneously, in order to adequately utilize the cues that present themselves during data collection. These cues allow for

further exploration of themes or concepts relevant to the research question. These cues are methodologically accessed through flexibility in questioning; a major feature of the semi-structured interview process. As data analysis proceeds, recent information will be compared to previous information, and incorporated into future interviews and analysis. All data was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim within a few days of collection and then coded for relevant themes.

Data was coded using open and axial coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe open coding as breaking data into parts to be compared for similarities and differences, and then grouping them into categories. While axial coding involves determining the relationship between the categories created. After the initial analysis of data, axial coding is used to abstract themes based on the context of the phenomenon, the conditions that give rise to it, the actions/interactional strategies used to manage/handle the phenomenon, and then the consequences of those strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These methods of data analysis are particularly appropriate for the research questions, as well as the epistemological underpinnings of this study, in which the context of immigration and acculturation are assumed to impact acculturation strategies and behavior.

I used a combination of line-by-line and sentence or paragraph coding for initial interviews. For instance, if a certain sentence or paragraph reflected parents' perceptions on 'discipline' it would be noted on a post-it-note. After conducting some more interviews and open coding sessions, numeric content analysis was used to ascertain the number of categories that appeared most frequently across the different interviews. This was done by grouping together the post-it-notes that contained similar summaries to form a distinct category (Marks, forthcoming). This plan of analysis was adapted from a similar strategy used by Marks, Nesteruk, Swanson,

Garrison, and Davis (2005). Axial coding was used to compare and make connections between categories. Eventually, the most salient and frequently mentioned concepts were identified.

In the bid to ensure credibility of the data, and that the research study is reflecting the participants intended meanings, I employed a peer debriefing process. Two PhD colleagues who are familiar with the qualitative research process participated in the peer debriefing process. They each read 3 randomly selected interview transcripts and independently coded them. We compared our open coding results, numeric content analysis and exchanged data interpretations.

Final data analysis identified seven themes as the most salient to understanding Nigerian parents' parenting experiences, as well as their children's acculturative experiences. These findings are presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the acculturation process of Nigerian immigrant parents and their young children. Particular attention is paid to the parenting experiences of these Nigerian immigrants within the context of a new socio-cultural ecology, as well as the children's experiences of bicultural adaptation. Participants' lived experiences were elicited through the use of qualitative research methodology, which facilitates in-depth personal narratives of their experiences and the meanings they attach to them.

This chapter contains the findings of the study as grouped into categories that address a particular theme. During the course of data analysis, about a dozen categories emerged that described Nigerian immigrants' meaning-making processes, however the scope of this study determined the presentation of only those themes that best represent this meaning-making process. These categories are listed below; however, the order of presentation is purely numerical and does not represent the salience of one category over another (except for 'Respect').

1. Acculturation: "I could pick some good from Nigeria and some good from here, and blend it together."
2. Respect: "A child just walks by you and doesn't acknowledge that you exist. That is very un-African."
3. Raising kids alone: "Nobody helps you; you are all by yourself."
4. Education: "If you want to become somebody, you have to go to school, education is the first key."
5. Discipline: "Freedom to train my child the way I ought to, not the way society is trying to compel me to train my child."
6. Language: "I had to explain myself over and over."

## 7. Bi-cultural children: “But I am Nigerian mom.”

On the following pages, these categories are presented with the help of participants’ narratives. Additionally, the properties of these categories are expounded in the sub-themes that support them.

### **Category 1. Acculturation: “I could pick some good from Nigeria and some good from here, and blend it together.”**

The topic of acculturation was addressed by only one question, but it re-appears as a continuous thread throughout the different narratives elicited. In order to present a clear and comprehensive picture of these immigrant parents’ adaptation predispositions, this category will be presented in two subcategories: a) parents’ degree of cultural blending, and b) parents goals for their children’s degree of cultural blending.

#### **Sub-category a). Parents’ degree of cultural blending: “Is it possible I take the good from Nigeria, take the good from U.S. and put them together?”**

*John*<sup>1</sup>(father): I try to find a common ground, you know, I borrow a little here and a little here and try to come up with what I think is ideal for my own home or my own interactions with my family.... it’s modified you know, I could pick some good from Nigeria, some good from here and blend it together, so pretty much a blended culture so to speak.

John and his family have lived in the U.S. for 8 years. John works as an information technology professional while pursuing a Ph.D. and his wife works at a medical facility as administrative personnel. All three of their children are school age and their daughter is in a Spanish immersion class at the local elementary school. Like John, most of the parents expressed a desire to blend cultural values from both Nigeria and the U.S. in order to create a uniquely functional and blended culture that serves the purpose of helping them provide their children

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms

with the best opportunities they deemed available for success. Based on the responses of some immigrant parents, their immigrant identifications allowed them to assess the worth of what would otherwise have been blindly accepted cultural norms and values. They have had to consciously evaluate the cultural choices available to them and choose which ones to keep and which ones to discard in order for them and their children to succeed in the U.S.

*Akin (father):* I don't have a perfect culture in Nigeria, and I don't think U.S. has a perfect culture and the way I see it is, what is really, really good back home that I value? It's more about your value system, you know? What do you really, really like back home that you do? What do they really, really do here that you like?

*Martha:* if they can have both that would be great, because like we did mention at the beginning of the interview, Americans have great cultures, Nigerians too have great cultures that will be great for them.

*Femi (father):* There should be a synergy or balance of both cultures. You can't throw out your cultural roots because you have a heritage. Nigeria has a great culture that has respect and great value and there is a need to keep this. Some you keep and some you throw away depending on how you look at it... In America there is a culture that gives confidence to children which we don't really have in Nigeria... This synergy will help the kids.

A majority of the participants indicated a strong inclination to find a balance between the two cultures that they experience by sloughing off norms from both cultures that are deemed negative, useless, or unproductive, all for the purpose of reaping the benefits of both worlds for them and their children. An apt example is the idea of desiring and encouraging open communication between parents and their kids; a norm that is not prevalent in the Nigerian culture where a majority of parents implement authoritarian parenting practices.

*John:* Back home we like to shout kids down, it's like your opinion doesn't count, you're still a kid. So I don't think that's ideal, you know, I mean I want my kid... my goal will be that my kid will trust me enough to be able to share whatever it is, maybe some developmental changes he's going through, maybe some challenge he's having at work...and all of those things.



*Akin:* One thing I learned about the culture here is that you allow children to express their opinions a lot. Give them the chance to talk about what they have in mind, don't shut them down.

*Sade (mother):* My parenting style has changed in the sense that there is open communication. At that age I didn't have the confidence to go meet my parents and say, "this is what I am thinking about, you did this to me and this is how it affected me and this is how I am feeling." My 7 year old will come to me 5, 6, 7 times and say "Can I ask you a question? Yesterday you said... why did you make that statement? Why did you talk like that? Why don't you want me to do this or that?" In Nigeria, I would have said, "Keep quiet! I told you not to do it so don't do it!" But here if she asked me that question she must have been thinking about it and I get that question a minimum of twice a day. I take time to explain. Sometimes she is satisfied or goes away and returns. If she is troubled, I can see it and she comes and tells me. I like that because if something is bothering the child, I want to know. Growing up, if something was bothering me, my mother would not respond the same way.

Another example of the conscious decision to discard cultural norms that are not deemed valuable to immigrant parents' goals for their children is the notion, expressed mostly by the mothers in the study, that American children are 'over-pampered', and unable to withstand life stresses because they are not 'tested'.

*Sade:* The children here [U.S.] have been protected to death, they are not tested. Because you don't have the dress color you want, you feel you want to die. It's being over pampered and over protected, but at the same time children over there [Nigeria] are being overworked and overused. There has to be a balance.

*Stella:* What I don't like is that the way they parent their kids or talk to their kids; they just let go of a lot of things like, don't talk to them too much, they get angry, they don't want them to get angry. They pamper them too much, so that one I don't like. I know they don't know any better .. but when they... mostly when they're small you just let them do things and go. But when they're big then they are stuck with it so that one I don't like.

*Ada (mother):* It's like the kids are ruling here, which is not supposed to be. That's why most of them are spoiled because they never suffered for one day to see the value of something, they believe it's there, and that you owe it to them, and that's why the life is

so different here. They live in a platter of gold but most of them don't want to use it, what they do is they abuse (it) and then they get into trouble.

The idea of a blended culture is suggested to be the best acculturation option for immigrant family generations (Berry, 1997). Some participants, however, indicated that given the choice, they would teach their children more of the Nigerian culture because they place a greater value on it. Since they grew up with it, they believe that it has served them well and gotten them to where they are right now. They believe it would be an asset for their children to have more of the Nigerian culture than they are able to give them.

*John:* In terms of culture, the African culture is better off. If the place were safe and we had our way we would be in Nigeria. Nigeria is just not safe, if it were, we would relocate back to Nigeria. If we had the option we would teach our children the Nigerian culture, there is dignity in African culture.

*Juliet (mother):* I would like (a cultural blend of) 80% Nigerian culture and 20% American. It favored me as a child and I want to pass that on to my children. At some point they will find a balance and I will find a balance

*Ada:* I would rather give up the American culture and take mine (Nigerian culture) because it helps me a lot and I would tell the kids why.

However, some parents who indicated a desire to provide their children with experiences of Nigerian culture also stated that they were not members of Nigerian group associations. Research on immigrant adaptation strategies propose that immigrants tend to seek out heritage country groups or associations to become plugged into, in order to tap into a collective pool of knowledge, support, experiences, and economic resources (Anthias & Cederberg, 2009; Berkman & Glass, 2000). Heritage group associations may also be used as an avenue for socializing young children into the cultural norms of the home country. The prevalent reason, given by participants, for not belonging to a Nigerian association is the perceived inconveniences of belonging to an 'organized' association.

*Ayo (father):* I like the Nigerian community; I like it more casual than being more organized as in, Oh! Every week I must go to an association [meeting]. I just want friends, Nigerian friends. My neighbor is Nigerian so, I mean we go out together, he comes here, and my children go to his house. I don't really like [that], Oh! Every Saturday I must go to a meeting, Nigerian meeting, I can't even be part of it. They have it in Oregon, they wanted me to be part of it, and I dodged it most times. I mean, I like that Nigerian community, you know, go to Nigerian parties sometimes, have Nigerian friends around, I like it. When we have our friends here, sometimes we are still up to 12 midnight talking, shouting, I like that experience a lot, you know. It doesn't happen all the time, there is a lot of stress to our lives here that sometimes you just want to relieve all those pressure, but the commitment of being in an organized community... I don't want to do that, I don't want to commit myself to that. But if it's on a casual basis then I'm all for it.

*Jacinta (mother):* If you're in [an] association; your member is doing something, you have to be there. You have to buy asoebi [Nigerian style fabric]. I don't want to work, leave my kids, working and buying asoebi, 'cause you have to look for the money to buy it. So it's... my highest preference is to take care of my kids, make sure they are in a direct path.

*Efehi (father):* We are not members of a Nigerian association. I feel a lot of people are not members of the association because of excess politics. Too many demands made on people from the association. It helps one to socialize but the hectic nature of living in America doesn't allow one to really participate. You come back, you are tired, and you want to sleep, so you don't really have time to participate. I feel one-to-one relationships matter and that doesn't really require joining an association. Even though you are in an association, you might not have a connection with others and you force yourself to be a member. You might not get that bond you need in an association. I prefer to find just one person to make a connection with.

*Sade:* As a choice we don't belong to a Nigerian association because it would clash with our religious beliefs because there are some things they do that are not Godly. They are not adding any value to my life and I don't see anything I can contribute. I know people who are members and they run around a lot, if someone is celebrating something. It's a distraction.

It would seem that these immigrant families prefer to seek out more casual and intimate individual relationships with other Nigerian families/individuals in order to maintain their Nigerian cultural identity. A notable observation is the comments that if an association member is doing 'something' (i.e. celebrating an important event like a wedding or a graduation), then the other members have to 'run around' to help celebrate the event. This expectation is a reference to

the communal nature of Nigerian socio-cultural dynamics where families and communities are obligated to participate in a family's celebration. Immigrant parents' decision to forego this obligation is, perhaps, an indication of a greater adoption of host culture individualism; the conscious evaluation and choosing of cultural norms that best benefit the nuclear family and not the extended Nigerian community. This decision to shun organized association membership also impacts the opportunities available for socializing young children into Nigerian cultural norms.

For the most part, the parents of this study appear to have adopted a bi-cultural disposition, specifically with regards to raising their children. This disposition appears to be relevant to the on-going decisions that they make, not just about their own interactions within the new culture, but also about how acculturated they would like for their children to be, as discussed in the next sub-category.

**Sub-category b). Parents' goals for their children's degree of cultural blending: "We have to mix both, but let them know the difference."**

All the parent participants categorically stated that one of the main reasons they immigrated to the U.S. was for a better life for their children. Specific reasons include 'safety', 'educational opportunities' and 'job security'. The participant parents indicated that they would like for their children to acculturate to the American society at the level that would enable them to integrate well in the host society. All of the parent participants expressed an awareness of the strong possibility that their children would most likely live the rest of their lives in the U.S.

*Funmi (mother):* I know that for them it's going to be more of U.S. [culture] because I think they're going to spend the rest of their lives here, but I would love them to have a bit of my culture as well, so... I'm not a big fan of imposing it on them. I will introduce it to them. I hope they will embrace it, but if not...

*Ada:* With the way we were raised, we want them to keep our culture... For me as a parent I would like them to adapt to the Nigerian culture, but because they live here and mix with American peers, they still have to do the American way. But we still have to

remind them that this is what your culture is like. So for some reason we have to mix both, but then let them know the difference. You can't tell them; "This is how it's done in Nigeria"... they are not in Nigeria. We still want them to have the history and the knowledge of what Nigeria is like, but at the same time they are in the U.S.

These parents' responses are representative of participant parents' keen awareness of the distinct cultural paradigms that exist between them and their children. Funmi, a working mother of two children, spoke above about the perceived inevitability of their children acculturating more to the U.S. culture. This perception is shared by several parents in this study, however, their responses to this perceived reality were varied and located on either side of a spectrum of responses.

*Juliet:* It makes me very sad to think about. I hope and pray that we will have the means to visit Nigeria at some point, and when we want to, for them [children] to experience it, because not having that hurts a lot.

*Funmi:* Well, I think I'm indifferent to it, I just feel, even me I don't think I'm going back home, I just see this place already as home and Nigeria already seems to me like a 2<sup>nd</sup> home so, sincerely that's the way I feel.

Most of the parents shared their desire to have the children visit Nigeria in order for them to become immersed in the culture and increase their Nigerian cultural identity. Sade, in response to her husband's opinion that he would rather not take the family to visit soon because of concerns about security, argued that the ideal preference was to get the kids to visit at a younger age and not when they are much older because then they would not have as deep a connection to their parents' heritage culture.

*Sade:* By that time the kids would have lost the idea of their culture in Nigeria. I want to visit once in awhile because I have family and friends. We spend money to take them on a vacation to other places, why don't we spend money to take them to Nigeria and see what that other side is like? The older they go the more difficult it will be to get them to go and visit. I don't want that. I will not limit them because I am afraid of security. If I have the means, money and time then why not? A month will not kill us.

Some of the parents did seek to try and balance the scale by arranging travel to Nigeria with the kids so that they can have a better idea of their parents' home country, and subsequently a better identification with their Nigerian cultural heritage. Air fare to Nigeria in the summer months, when school is out and the children are able to go, costs an average of \$1000 per person. Most of the parents said that they did not have the means to travel often and the ones who had, shared that it was a big deal as they had to make arrangements for safe travel, and also purchase gifts for a lot of family and community members as the community would be expected to come and greet their sojourning relatives.

*Jacinta:* My brother chartered a big vehicle with AC and everything; before we got there my friends were waiting, my cousin, and my uncle. My cousin and my friend travelled with us back home with MOPOL [Military police]. You have to protect all these ones [the children], 'cause if you're from America they think you're rich. So we had 2 MOPOL [escorts] that came with us and stayed some few times. So they saw all the houses ... mostly my oldest son will ask questions. I will say, "Are you seeing all these houses?" He will say, "yeah." They were just visiting... within themselves they were just talking ... but they don't have a choice anyway, going or not going they don't have a choice, they have to.

Another perception shared by some of the fathers in the study is the notion that encouraging the children to adapt to both Nigerian and U.S. cultures opens the door for diversifying their cultural experiences and creating greater personal opportunities. These immigrant fathers took a global perspective of their children's development and were expanding the possibilities of their immigrant identification as people who can adapt to diverse cultures and situations for the utmost benefit. This identification might indicate a perception that they are not rooted or tied to one geographical location, having made the first step to leave their homeland.

*James (father):* I think diversity is more a good than bad thing. When you manage to integrate different cultures in yourself then you tend to become a better person versus sticking to your original culture. The good thing is, don't totally forget about your original culture. Try to integrate it into the new culture and try to diversify. In business

it's called diversifying your portfolio. For my daughter, knowing that she has American and Nigerian culture in her makes her better than both her parents. The thing is that she has to keep those cultures, if she tries to adapt solely to the American culture that's when problems start cropping [up] and she starts behaving like... especially the dressing. Right now we control it, very soon when they are 14 and get their cell phones, then they will start controlling us, the parents.

*Akin:* One thing we should all appreciate is, the way this world is going its becoming like one place. It's that global village thing. When I came here initially, I never had a burger before I came to the U.S. I don't eat cheese, I don't know anything about cheese; in fact I was even bad; I can't eat ketchup! [laughter]. So when I was coming, men if you see the elubo [Nigerian local dish] that I brought, I loaded it! But how can I buy all these things? And you have to start embracing the new culture. Now I eat everything, I eat salad, you name it. If you can give your children that same kind of thing that they can survive anywhere, it's not more of I just want them to eat Nigerian food, its being able to embrace something different.

*Bayo (father):* They have a good advantage [if they learn the heritage language] because if you take them to Nigeria they can communicate with relatives in Nigeria. Where you work in America might need you to be a point person to deal with other Africans. There is a possible occupational advantage if a regional/language rep. is needed. They are young and can learn fast, so if they have the opportunity let them be challenged to do it, if not it won't bring the best out of them. There are children who can speak multiple languages so it's an advantage to have multi-cultural heritage.

Introducing and sustaining interactions with Nigerian foods imparts an increasing awareness of cultural heritage. The parent participants were clearly influenced by their Nigerian cultural heritage in the diets they encouraged and enforced at home. Similar motivations were found among Portugese, Asian, and African immigrant parents (Garnweidner et al., 2012; Morrison & James, 2009). These parents also invested in food enculturation as a strategy to help their children identify with the heritage culture. All of the parents in the present study immediately declared that they eat Nigerian dishes and that they would like their children to develop a taste for it because it is 'a part of their heritage', and 'healthier.'

*Binta (mother):* We eat Nigerian food, go to African market and buy stuff and cook our food. They [kids] eat all our food. It's important because it is their heritage, also to let them know it is a good diet. American diet trains kids not to eat the right stuff. Fast foods are not healthy and there are some businesses trying to sell the right food. We eat fast

food [McDonalds] sometimes. If they ask all the time then I draw the line. We are doing that to eat together as a family and we can cook at home. We eat out, but [the] majority of our meals are at home. The younger one eats some and not others. If that is all that is available she would rather fast for the whole day. The older one eats more of the Nigerian food; she might not know the name but will ask for it.

*Juliet:* I would prefer for us to eat African food; 95% Nigerian food and 5% American food. It's important for kids to eat Nigerian/African food because it is part of their cultural heritage.

It is necessary to note that parents' attempts to enculturate their children into Nigerian food customs are relatively easier to accomplish today than a decade ago. Anecdotal evidence indicates that it was previously harder to acquire the necessary ingredients to re-create Nigerian meals here in the US. The increasing variety of cultural cuisines available in the US builds the perception of a multicultural environment that parents appreciate and employ as a medium for teaching their children about their Nigerian cultural heritage. However, it is evident in parents' responses that they struggle with getting the children to eat Nigerian cuisine, but they are equally determined to see that their children are socialized into that specific cultural domain, even if other domains might be hard to effectively implement.

*Martha (mother):* I stay on them to eat Nigerian food. Of course they revolt, I don't expect them to eat it the way they would eat [a] burger but I think they've gotten used to it. Initially they were so used to the "junk food," but now I think they've come to a common ground. We probably do that maybe on the weekend, at one time it was every Sunday...a time that will allow them [finish their food], even if it takes you 5 hours to finish the fufu [Nigerian dish] no problem. I think it's more of a feeling that the African food is more healthy.

*Ada:* All we have in the house is Nigerian food. Occasionally we will eat American food, maybe once on Sunday we will get pizza; once in a while if its somebody's birthday we go to a Chinese restaurant but we always try to introduce [Nigerian food]. Sometimes, even if the kids don't want it, I will tell them that that is all they have and they will be forced to eat it. And when they try it they will say, "Oh grandma! This is good, what is this called?" "Its egusi [local Nigerian dish]." "It's good, it's good. Make me some



more.” It’s important for them to eat Nigerian food, but I have things like noodles, spaghetti which they eat once in a while.

*Akin:* They don’t like it (Nigerian food) but I make them eat it. I make them eat iyon and moi-moi. If they don’t want any of them, I don’t care. That’s one thing that we still struggle with in this house; myself and my wife and my children. My son will say “This is what I like to eat, I don’t like this one.” “What do you mean? Eat, its good food. Be happy with what you are given, and be thankful for it. Eat it, okay”. I don’t want, o! [a situation where], this is the food I made for this one, that is the food this one is eating; back in my house; we all ate the same food. We cook the same food we eat the same food.

In summary, accomplishing a balance of Nigerian and American culture appears to be an important framework for the parenting decisions that are made by these parents. The goals that they have for their children’s socio-cultural adaptation are influenced by the reality of the greater weight that American culture has on their children’s cultural identity development. The financial and logistical challenge of traveling to Nigeria, as well as a limited interaction with other Nigerians, diminishes how much of the home culture the children will authentically experience. In spite of the challenges, however, these parents attempt to provide a Nigerian cultural experience for their children, and one of the ways they do so, is by teaching them culturally appropriate behavior, from a Nigerian perspective. One of such behavioral expectations is respect; the next category to be addressed.

**Category 2. Respect: “A child just walks by you and doesn’t acknowledge that you exist. That is very un-African.”**

Another category that emerged among all the participants is the topic of respect. They unanimously attested to the ingrained and widely socialized manner in which Nigerian children were to show respect to adults or those in authority. Parent participants indicated their strong

displeasure with the way American children addressed or behaved towards adults, particularly their parents.

*Ada:* It has been a struggle to keep them from being confused about their culture because, in greeting for instance, somebody wakes up in the morning and they don't say anything to you, in the American way. How can you wake up in the morning and you don't say anything to me? But in Nigerian culture they will tell you, "When you wake up in the morning, you say 'good morning mom, good morning daddy'". And in American way when they come into the house they say, "hi!" "Who are you hi-ing? Me? No! You say good afternoon." This is just me. These are the things you have to teach them. Thank God they adapt to it, they come in, they say, "Good morning mom! How are you grandma?" And they give us a hug. There's a difference, unlike coming in and...no, you don't 'hi!' me in this house.

All of the participants either stated categorically, or implied that such behavior (or the lack thereof) is a cultural norm that they would not adapt to here in the U.S. They told of strategies that they used or are currently using to keep their children from adapting to that particular cultural norm. It is important to note that there was no concise list of behaviors and attitudes that made up the category of respect. From participants' accounts, the behaviors and attitudes appeared to be age and situation dependent. This category mostly addresses the two dimensions of greeting and talking back, with a few other dimensions mentioned. Some of the accounts are below:

*Bayo:* [For the] Yoruba, we are very respectful ... there is a way I greet my parents, I have to prostrate as a Yoruba man, you understand, women will have to kneel down.

*Martha:* for me personally I refuse to adapt to it. I refuse to. Like I tell my kids, "when you see somebody in the morning, you tell them, 'good morning.'" I.. for me, I refuse to adapt to that. Or when somebody is talking to you [and says], "Give me bottled water." Fine, you go and get the bottled water, but I need you... I need you to acknowledge you heard me so I don't have to repeat myself. I refuse to adapt, adapt [to] that culture. I try to teach them what I think is right.

*Akin:* Okay, like the kid comes, wakes up in the morning saying, “Good morning.” It’s something I would love. Even right here going to work, I have some colleagues that they won’t even say hi in the morning, you get what I’m saying? I don’t like it. That’s the life that we lived, that’s how we grew up. So to them here it might not be a big deal. You see yourself in the morning, the first thing somebody is asking you about is the project you were working on yesterday without even saying good morning to you ... so I think it’s one plus I would like to take from my Nigerian culture; my son wakes up in the morning [and] says, “Good morning daddy,” you get what I’m saying?

*Kehinde (father):* Children walk by an adult without acknowledging the adult. Maybe as an African person, a child just walks by you and doesn’t acknowledge that you exist. That is very un-African but that is the way they were brought up so I can’t blame the child; that is how they were brought up. Or children see an older person who needs help and they don’t offer to help, or you see someone sweeping the floor [and don’t help].

It is important to note that, from a Nigerian perspective, individuals are expected to contribute to, and maintain the social cohesion of the community by acknowledging the presence and social worth of every member. It is considered a cultural anathema to encounter another person and not acknowledge them in greeting; even more so for young children to begin their day without giving proper salutations to their parents and older siblings. This is perhaps why the parents in this study were passionate about their disappointment that the host culture does not facilitate an awareness of this seemingly obvious obligation. Other dimensions of respect were also mentioned:

*Akin:* But the truth is, that respect thing, you don’t see much of it here. And, like my parents will sit down here, I want to bring their food, I handle it with 2 hands; I put it on the table for them. This is how I was raised; your kid here can use his left hand and give stuff to you. That’s not how I’m raised. They don’t care; they don’t get all these trainings from school, it’s all the things we have to do as parents. If I value it, those are the things I have to give back to my children. Sometimes when my son gives stuff to me I say come on, stop that, use your right hand.

*Stella (mother):* Like, my husband always tells them that back home in Nigeria when we finish, daddy finish[es] eating, you come and get the plate and go wash it.

*Sade:* African culture trains you to give maximum regard to elders or adults in authority. Teaches children not to just look at people or ignore people, say hello, don't ignore people.

*Juliet:* Growing up in Nigeria kids are raised to say, "Yes sir/Yes ma" to older people and you put your head down and not make eye contact when talking to an adult as a sign of respect.

*John:* American values I reject are kids calling parents and aunties by their first name, or saying "Hi" to their daddy or someone of their daddy's or uncle's age. When you notice unwanted behavior, you tell them it is not acceptable.

Most of the parents also spoke passionately about children 'talking back' to them; a concept that is rooted in the aforementioned expectation that children should show respect to those who are older than they are, and also to those in authority. Talking back does not translate to the normal back and forth of a conversation between an adult and a child, but considers the body language, attitude, and tone of voice of the child involved in the conversational exchange. From the Nigerian perspective, children are considered rude if they refute the parent's statement, or if they argue with a parent or adult. By doing so, they are deemed to be calling into question the adult's character, integrity, judgment, and authority.

*Ada:* In my culture, you don't talk back when your parents talk; you keep your mouth shut. But my daughter wants to know why, how, and all, and I have to shut her down. They do talk back and it bothers me, and they ask so many questions. So I had to teach them not to talk back to me. Even if they have something to say, they can come back to me later and explain why they did/said something, [but] not when I am yelling at them and they are talking back.

*Juliet:* She finished doing her homework and I told her to put her books and things away as she just can't throw them on the floor. She responds with, "But why do I have to do it all the time?"

*John:* Kids talking back to their parents is not common in Nigeria... At whatever age or educational status, it is frowned upon to talk back to one's parents in Nigeria, when you begin to do that it's called rebelling against your parents. Even if you have a doctorate

degree you don't talk back, your daddy is your daddy and your mommy is your mommy. Even when you are talking back, you present issues with respect.

*Grace (mother):* You know, it's something you don't even dream of, like your parents are talking and you're talking back. "My son... no you can't argue with me, when I finish talking, then you say what's in your mind, you don't exchange words with me." Mm-mm (no), it won't happen.

*Sade:* Every day! One day my daughter told me, "Are you dumb or something? I've told you..." And I think "O my God!" She did it a second time and I called her [on it] and talked to her about the proper way to talk to an adult. She said she had heard something and was imitating it, that she didn't know not to talk that way. I think, well, it's because we are in America, some of the words and expressions I personally wouldn't dare use with an adult. Some I ignore, and some I correct.

Parents shared that these cultural expectations that they had about children's behavior in conversation with an adult were easily adopted by children in Nigeria because it is part of their everyday lives. Being in the U.S. created a dearth of socializing influences that would have facilitated a socio-cultural learning dynamic (Vygotsky, 1962) that would have taught the children expected cultural behaviors. A lot of the parents, particularly the mothers, complained about the lack of communal parenting assistance and reinforcement that they experience here in the U.S.

*Martha:* I mean, back home those are not things you deal with, they are, I mean they are... they are known growing up as a child. You don't need, you don't need anybody to tell you that, maybe because you see it displayed ... You see it done everywhere, wherever you go to you see it done, so you kind of pick it [up] that way. But here, it's like you have to teach them because it's not part of their culture, probably they are not obligated to.

*Jacinta:* You know, in Nigeria, it comes automatically. They grow up, everybody is the same, they don't see any other side of life, and it's just that side; one face they see.

Respectful behavior is paramount in the systemic maintenance of adult-child relationships in Nigeria (Ohuche, 1986). Based on parent responses, this was the perspective that

these immigrant parents grew up with; children grew up in an environment where they ‘just know’ how and what to do, in order to show respect to an adult. They believe that being in the U.S. created a dearth of socializing influences that would have taught the children expected cultural behaviors. A lot of the parents, particularly the mothers, complained about the lack of communal parenting assistance here in the U.S. and having to subsist on a two-person cultural community that consists of mother and father, to socialize the children into parents’ expected behavior. This perception will be further addressed in the next section.

### **Category 3: “Raising kids alone: Nobody helps you; you are all by yourself.”**

It is customary in Nigeria for new mothers to get a young girl to help them ‘mind’ the baby. Women with older kids may also take in a ‘house-help’ to help with daily domestic chores around the house. It is from that frame of reference that the mothers in this study approach their new lives in the U.S.

*Ada:* Another challenge is that you don’t have a baby sitter and you suffer and it’s challenging. All my kids, none of them went to baby sitters, and I suffered it. Nobody helps you; you are all by yourself, me and my husband. Unlike at home, your aunties are there... you don’t even have to get permission (to have a relative come stay with you). So there are a lot of challenges.

Additionally, the communal nature of life in Nigeria ensures that all members of a given village/tribe/community have a unified perception about expected attitudes and behaviors for young children. The adults all watch over the children and can correct any child who ‘misbehaves,’ even if not their parent. Children are raised to implement a classic socio-cultural learning style: the older ones teach the younger ones varying lessons ranging from putting their clothes on, to appropriate body language when addressing a parent/adult. Below are some representative responses that address this issue.

*Funmi:* In Nigeria, you know every other person is watching them [the children], and they want to help you and you want to help your child be successful. Here, if you don't work on your child... if you don't train your child properly at home, the teacher will just leave the child to do whatever.

*Stella:* You have to tell them or they don't know. How will they know? And back home they relate with a lot of people, but it's just you [here], so if you don't tell them, they don't know. [In Nigeria] They have their age-mates, they have people older, they have older brothers, they have... But here, it's just you and them so where will they know from? T.V.? And the way they learn from TV is not good. The way they know from T.V., you don't want them to know that way. So you have to tell them the right way. But back home it's everybody. It's what we know [that] we know. What they know from TV is not what you want them to know, so it's a big challenge... I know that they're even suffering because they don't know... you explain and explain and explain, then one day they will catch it.

*Efehi:* Parenting is a community job. Neighbors and relatives help watch and discipline kids. Here, it's all on the parents; it's just you alone taking care of the kids. Back home, when I had my first kid, in the morning we drop off the kid with grandma and we don't come back till about 5pm. There are people around to help take care of the kids. There are always cousins, uncles, younger siblings, neighbors, family members there to assist you.

*Sade:* If someone sees your child misbehaving or having issues, anybody at any time can step up to help guide/correct your child, but here, if you see a child misbehaving you pretend like you don't see because you don't know if your response will be misconstrued. It's not that you don't want to help; you just don't know how the parent will see/react to it. So people tend to turn in the opposite direction and then it's the child that falls through the cracks.

*Ora n'azu nwa* is a commonly stated Igbo principle which means that the community trains the child. This idea is widely acknowledged and implemented in Nigeria, but is a stark contrast to the societal view of parenting in the new U.S. culture. Participant parents perceive that in the U.S., everyone 'minds their own business,' hence the diminished inclination to publicly chastise a child who errs. The Nigerian communal environment is difficult to re-create, as parents noted that they did not even feel completely comfortable with letting their kids play

with their neighbors because they don't know them. Parents shared that the full weight of child-rearing is on them and they make sure to impart goals and expectations to their children.

Despite the perceived parenting challenges of 'raising kids alone,' these parents shared that they mitigated this challenge by implementing various strategies that range from having a grandparent or a relative visit intermittently, or adjusting work schedules in order to accommodate their children's school and extra-curricular activities. Parent participants also shared that they were motivated to 'manage' the situation by remembering why they migrated in the first place. By developing a narrative that contrasts the quality of life here in the U.S. with life in Nigeria, they maintained their motivation to overcome perceived stressors. This perception is also reflected in a study on resilience among Latino families (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). The parents in this study mentioned that the quality of education was one benefit that motivated their continued resilience. Further discussion on this next category is presented in the next section.

**Category 4: Education: "If you want to become somebody you have to go to school, education is the first key."**

All of the parents in this study attested to the importance of education to the success of an individual. All the parents had obtained a first degree prior to immigrating, and two of them were pursuing advanced degrees in the U.S. at the time of the interviews. Education was seen as a means to obtain gainful employment, as well as an avenue for acquiring self-discipline skills.

*Ada:* If you want to become somebody you have to go to school, education is the first key. Without education, you're not going anywhere here, because you have to have it on the paper. So I give them the impression [or reminder] that your daddy is an engineer, I am a nurse; I want you to be more than me, like a doctor, because I want you to be more than me. You just have to encourage them and you have to be a role model for them. I go to school, they see me study, and I help them with their homework. I encourage them as much as I can.



*Martha:* Academic goal, you need to have a goal that is academic related. The least you can get for yourself is a first degree. That is the least, at least, that is the least you can get.

*Akin:* One thing I know growing up and even up till now is, education seems to help everything. It seems to help almost everything, it might not be absolute. You see people that have quality education; they seem to live a decent life. I don't know if I have a good statistics to that, but to achieve quality education, it requires discipline, it requires a lot of commitment. So I'm training my child to have good education, that's one thing I want to invest my energy in.

*Jacinta:* My dad was a lawyer, that's why he told us that he didn't build a mansion and all that, the only thing he can give us is education, and that if we cannot get it we are not inheriting anything from him. So if you want to go to school to any level, just go, and that will better you in life, and that was true. Our goal is for them (children) to be the highest. We tell them that people that go to Harvard and Yale; they are the same like you.

*Ime (mother):* The kids watch TV; they want to have cars and beautiful things. I tell them they have to get an education before they have all that. They can't be flipping burgers and getting all those things. Then they ask what flipping burgers means and I explain it to them that they have to go to school and also that they are more recognized (there are better benefits) when you go into something medical or something social because that's the only way they will give you a job.

Previous research documents the high importance that Nigerian immigrant parents place on education, and the sacrifices that they make in order to acquire this goal (Amayo, 2009; Fogg, 2009). Just as with other domains of cultural adjustment, Nigerian immigrant parents use their pre-migration experience of education, as well as their motivations for immigration, to determine how much of a valuable asset education is in the new world. In recent years, the educational standards in Nigeria have declined considerably (Ofoegbu, Clark & Osagie, 2013). One of the participant parents noted that private institutions are the only other options available to parents who desire quality education for their children, but it is an expensive option.

The greater bulk of Nigerian immigrants come through student or diversity visas (Akerele, 2003; Njubi, 2001; Okoli, 2002); a trend that is reflected with the current study sample.

All but one of the couples came via diversity visas. Among all the families interviewed, one or both spouses had re-trained at some point in order to obtain employment; an experience shared by other immigrants. This socio-economic structure cultivates the perception that ‘without education, you are not going anywhere here’; a perception that impacts parents’ expressed expectations for their children’s academic success. All of the parents shared their desire for their children to obtain a qualitatively better education than that available in the home country. In accordance with that goal, the parents implement various strategies to help their children understand that education is paramount. These include ‘getting them to do some reading and math before they play during summer,’ ‘my husband takes them to the library and they read for 2 hours,’ and ‘as soon as they come back from school they nap, and then homework, no play.’

Along with the educational goal that these parent participants have for their children, they also expressed their views on discipline as discussed in the next section.

**Category 5. Discipline: “Freedom to train my child the way I ought to, not the way society is trying to compel me to train my child.”**

The category of discipline drew the most responses that showed self-reflection and attitudinal/behavioral changes in the parent participants. Discipline is a topic that encouraged an evaluation of how it is done in Nigeria versus how it is done in America, as well as what options are available to parents here. In order to present the components and nuances of this category effectively, parent responses will be presented under three sub-categories: a) parental authority, b) discipline, and c) changes in parenting.

**Sub-category a). Parental authority: “In Africa, we the parents rule.”**

As stated previously, the parent participants in this study grew up in a socio-cultural environment where there were categorically defined expectations for interactions between, and

obligations toward adults and children. Children are expected to defer to the adult, and age was commensurate to certain degrees of authority; older siblings held a certain degree of authority over the younger ones. Within such a paradigm, parents are imbued with absolute authority (culturally and legally) in all aspects of raising their children, particularly discipline. The responses below represent that mind-set and how parents are adapting to cultural paradigm changes in the U.S.

*Martha:* Okay for me, looking back at how I was raised by my parents, I had parents that were very strict. I mean when they tell you to do something, they don't have to tell you twice, and you don't have to ask them why.

Martha's comment exemplifies the experiences alluded to or directly stated by other parents at different points in the interviews. The benefits and detriments of parental authority were evaluated, and parents shared their thoughts on how effective or important it is to them currently.

*Sade:* Nigerian parenting sometimes can be brutal and careless because of the lack of checks and balances. They don't care about how you feel. Because they are the parents they are the final authority and they execute that power with impunity.

*Ada:* The kids rule [here], "I want this, I want that", and they give it to them. It's not about want, but about needs. In Africa, we the parents, rule.

*John:* Back home, somehow it's like the master-slave relationship kind of thing, where the father does no wrong, the mother does no wrong, you don't question...but here I think it's good that sometimes they question your authority, you know; especially if they do it politely. But back home there's nothing like politely or not polite. [If] you question authority: it's rude, so yea, something like that.

*Juliet:* I want her, [my daughter], not to be lazy and fight over what to do or what not to do, and to know that her parents are in charge right now and that they are the ones she needs to listen to. Hopefully when she gets to school [she will] concentrate on what she's told to do, not what she wants to do. I am grateful for that structure now because when I wake up, I know I have to be at work at 6, and I know my schedule from that time to

what time I need to get to work. I would not have known how to keep a schedule at school and work, take my job seriously, or obey rules and regulations at school if I didn't have this foundation and know how to follow the rules. My parents were really strict. ..Some of the behaviors I see here in the U.S. [bother me]-talking back to parents when it's not necessary, the power struggle. "I want to do my own things and not what my parents want."

As a result of the patriarchal family structure in Nigeria, parents (fathers specifically) possess and exert decision-making authority over the family. Fathers can decide children's career path, marriage partner, and to some degree, how their young adult children can spend their income. Efehi, one of the participant fathers, shared a story about how his parents had exerted their authority over him in order to make him comply with their goals for him.

*Efehi:* In Nigeria, if a child does not comply with parents' long term goals for them, there are many things you can do; they would be sent to the most rural area/school. I was a rebel and did not want to go to school. My elder sister had finished teacher training and she got a job in one of the rural villages with no electricity, transportation or amenities. My parents took me there to stay with my sister. I stayed a year and later changed my mind about the benefits of education. You can't do that here, otherwise the government will come looking for you and come after you.

All of the parents talked about having to modify their claim to absolute parental authority, since moving to the U.S. This change was influenced by personal realizations of the benefits of a change in discipline style, or by constraining societal norms and/laws. Changes in discipline style/attitude are discussed next.

**Sub-category b). Discipline: "I am careful in dealing with them."**

At some point during the interviews, each parent/couple mentioned that spanking was a form of discipline they had experienced growing up. Their accounts and comments are a testament to the previously mentioned prevalence of authoritarian parenting style used by most Nigerian parents, and also the predominant notion that parental authority is sovereign and

unquestionable. This background predisposed the participant parents to have that form of discipline as a frame of reference for, and sometimes as, the first reaction to a discipline situation. Most parents, however, talked about the constraints they felt were placed on them by the host culture's norms and laws.

*Sade:* [I don't have the] freedom to train my child the way I ought to, not the way society is trying to compel me to train my child. If my child does something, I can't spank her legitimately without fear of retribution, even though the child has done something really serious. I am training my child within the parameters of what society allows, according to the dictates of the majority, although bending it a little. I have to make sure that I stay within the gray area and try to make sure I don't stray too far. If my child does something and is told to go to her room, she might get on the computer to play games and that is no discipline. It's a daily challenge. Where I can bend/compromise, I will. But where I cannot, I will stand my ground; if today is the day they are coming for me then so be it.

*Akin:* There are some things I've found out in their culture here; Oh! Don't spank the child just leave him [to] do whatever he wants to do. I knew how I grew up, if my parents had left me alone, I probably wouldn't have turned out the way I am because there is an amount of fear that I had in my parents that if I should do this, if they should know about it, it's going to be a spanking, it's going to be big time beating for me and its always at the back of my mind if I want to do something bad.

*Kehinde:* Children are so free to express their opinion and sometimes it goes to the extreme. You do something to your kid the kid knows that I'm going to call 911 for my parents, and those guys will show up at your door and they will handcuff you and take you away. Nobody is going to do that back home, you understand? The kids grew up sometimes to know that the system is in their favor, and they can get away with a lot of things even with their parents, and that's why I think right now when they are really, really young you want to put a lot of things in them that shows that oh, this is how we do things, this is your place in the society, you're not like those other guys. You get what I'm saying?

*Bayo:* I mean there is good and bad to it because it also cautions the parent; you get what I'm saying? I mean I don't want to be excessive in how I administer punishment to my kid because if you are excessive about it, it can land the kid in emergency [room], so having that at the back of your mind, that if you do it too much you can be arrested for it, it's also good in some ways, but the other bad part of it is [that] the children know that, 'I

am free to call the police on my dad.’ It’s also a bad one, so it’s [tough] striking equilibrium here.

The comments above denote the idea that parents are evaluating the social ecology of the host culture, and creating a unique social ecology in their homes that prepares the children to internalize their bi-cultural lives in the new culture by teaching them “this is how we do things.” This domain-specific form of acculturation enables parents to socialize their children into specific cultural norms, not only about discipline/parental authority, but other cultural domains as well.

Also evident in parents’ narratives, is the perception that societal institutions (i.e., government, schools, and police) have taken away the parent’s authority in raising their children. As succinctly stated by Sade earlier, the perception of some is that the freedom to train their children the way they see fit has been taken from them, and all they can do is pray that the children turn out alright.

*Efehi:* Certain things my kids do here that if they do it back home, I will get mad [angry] and may want to spank them. I am careful in dealing with them, especially at a certain age, so as not to involve the police when dealing with my kids. Kids know their rights, and the limits of the parents. They know that if the parents go beyond certain limits, they can call the police. As they grow older I am careful. Back home, they know they need to comply. Here kids are trained at school about their rights, where to go to report parents. They know they are not supposed to be spanked or maltreated. They tell them from school. The school tells them where to go to. They tell them if you cannot go anywhere, come back (to school) and report to your teacher, and the teacher will start from there.

*Femi:* And then the laws also [contribute] as I have some friends tell me that their children go to school and tell the teacher that they’ve been spanked and they call the police on them, so it becomes a little difficult for a parent to instill discipline which affects children as they grow up.

*Ada:* The government will tell them what is good or bad, the government will even tell them, ‘you don’t have to do this for your parents, if they touch you, you can call 911.’ It’s

like the kids are ruling here, which is not supposed to be. That's why most of them are spoiled because they never suffered for one day to see the value of something. They believe it's there, and that you owe it to them, and that's why the life is so different here.

*Efehi:* If something happens and the kids are non-compliant, the way you want them to comply about pursuing the dream you have for them, there is nothing you can do. You can't force them, you can only talk and pray; praying that God will help them see that their parents' goals for them are in their best interest. Achieving that dream is the best for the family and best for them. We just keep praying that God will open their eyes to see that.

*John:* It has changed from back home where I would want to deal with them differently. My parenting style has been changed by school/American culture. For now I don't feel too bad about that because the kids are younger, respectful, and obedient. It would be worse if kids were disobedient because there would be nothing I can do. For now, I am not really looking at the other side, but I am praying about when kids get older, about 15/16, and change. They will be trying to get into college and will want to argue with me. I always make sure they go to church and are around Christian families so they can learn good behavior.

In the face of perceived constraints to their discipline style, some of the parents indicated that they were helpless against the dictates of the 'system' that compels them to mete out discipline in the 'American' way. A majority of the parents shared ways that they have had to change their parenting styles since moving to the U.S., as a result of the challenges they experienced and the need to adjust to the new culture. These changes are discussed next.

**Sub-category c). Changes in parenting style: "Instead, it's a lot of talking...you talk it over."**

In the process of interviews, several parents engaged in evaluative discussions about the 'new' way of discipline that they feel compelled to implement with their children versus the way they had grown up with in Nigeria.

*Martha:* Here in America, you discover that when you ask, when you tell your child to do anything, the first question is "but why?" and initially that was, that was a challenge that was kind of shocking to me. Initially, I considered it that the child is being rude, being

disrespectful. That was part of the cultural shock that I had. But over time I discover it's like that is what the system entails. So over time I had to kind of un-teach, or un-learn what I knew back home; how I was raised.

Martha's comment exemplifies parents' initial preconceptions of how children are expected to behave, and also the challenge facing immigrant parents to choose between cognitively adapting to new cultural norms or to maintain their cultural expectations. Just like Martha, a lot of the parents chose to adapt to certain parenting behaviors and attitudes because of the undeniable influence of the environment.

*John:* Here we've learned over time that it's not out of disrespect that the kids ask their 'why?' It is just part of the culture, you know, so yeah, so it's part of the adjustment that we had to pretty much do. Again, another thing is, the way kids are disciplined here is different from the way we discipline them back home, so...or the way we were brought up, or I mean what we knew to be discipline is different from the way it is here. At least I know that when you go wrong, there is the ... something to spank you with, but that's not how it is here. Instead it's, it's a lot of talking, you have to talk it over... and then the 'time out' and all those, you know, but I think that's been something that we've had to adjust to.

*Akin:* One thing I learned about the culture here is that you allow children to express their opinions a lot. Give them the chance to talk about what they have in mind, don't shut them down. We don't have it back home that much. [In Nigeria], you want to say something, they want to shut you down; "How did you know about that? Gbenu eson! Mechie onu!" [Shut up].

*Efehi:* My parenting has changed since being in the U.S., because we have learned to explain to the children why they need to do something. You just have to change, otherwise you won't be able to go along; there will be a lot of problems. You need to curtail and accommodate some of these flops here and there to see how you can manage the situation. But we still have some standards that we will not allow them to pass.

For some other parents, the decision to adopt a different parenting style came about through self-reflection on the effectiveness of the style they were familiar with growing up.



Perhaps the juxtaposition of contrasting styles (yelling vs. talking) brought an evaluation of the efficacy of each.

*Stella:* Back home, [if] you see the child do something, you spank them or you scream. So [but] here, I understand that sometimes they don't even know what they've done, [and] you just scream. But here you call them and, after screaming and whatever, you call them and let them know that this is why I'm screaming. But back home we don't have that patience at all, you just feel the child is supposed to know... So that's what I'm working on now, trying to explain to them, 'do this, do that'... so that next time they will understand.

*Ime:* At the end of the day, I will talk to the child about her behavior... This is a good thing; here I will explain later, and sometimes I don't want to explain later. My attitude is that, you [the child] should have known. But the child doesn't understand [what they did], and they might come back a day or a week later to ask why mommy reacted the way she did, and then I will think, 'Oh God have mercy!' And then explain. If it were to be in Nigeria I would not explain and that is high handed. That was how I was raised. I did not understand a lot of things and I just get whopped, period...I believe that my parenting style has changed since being in the states. In Nigeria I wouldn't explain anything and the government can't do anything about it.

*Ife (mother):* [My] Parenting style has changed, in the sense that there is open communication. At that age, I didn't have the confidence to go meet my parents and say, 'this is what I am thinking about, you did this to me and this is how it affected me and this is how I am feeling.' My 7 year old will come to me 5, 6, 7 times and say "Can I ask you a question? Yesterday you said... why did you make that statement? Why did you talk like that? Why don't you want me to do this or that?" In Nigeria I would have said "Keep quiet! I told you not to do it so don't do it!" But here, if she asked me that question, she must have been thinking about it, and I get that question a minimum of twice a day. I take time to explain. Sometimes she is satisfied, or [sometimes she] goes away and returns. If she is troubled, I can see it and she comes and tells me. I like that, because if something is bothering the child, I want to know. Growing up, if something was bothering me, my mother would not respond the same way.

*Juliet:* Explaining is more of the American style of parenting. The American culture gives you a breather-where you have to breathe and talk rather than be violent. If I spank her, that doesn't help her understand the reason why she needs to put her books away. I have to tell her why it's important for her to take care of her things, versus being aggressive and hitting her for talking back first.

Although the parents shared their experiences of adapting to new parenting norms and styles, Juliet shared that her adaptation was situational, and depended on the context of a behavioral infraction. Her account provides insight into the durability of ingrained cultural attitudes.

*Juliet:* The American culture has given us the privilege of being able to talk and use your words as your power and strength instead of using aggressive behavior. I prefer the American [style], but at some point the African [style] comes back again. If the behavior is repeated on purpose, I might do the talking but I will use the African method of spanking her somewhere where it will not cause harm. Not beating, but spanking her and telling her, “you don’t talk back to me.” It’s just that thing in you that, it’s not a habit, or a desire to cause harm, but a part of your upbringing that helped when you were growing up, and it could be a solution, so you use it at your disposal. But I think the talking first [is best]. So yes, we will mix the styles depending on the situation.

In summary, these immigrant parents appear to have undergone parenting attitude and style changes, as a result of their continued interaction with U.S. culture. This cognitive and behavioral transformation is an adequate example of the potential that immigrant parents have, to evaluate and choose cultural norms that best benefit them and their families. In a similar vein, these parents may choose whether or not to transfer their heritage language to their children. Their opinions and experiences on this topic are presented next.

#### **Category 6. Language: “I had to explain myself over and over.”**

Parents’ comments on the topic of language included their desire to impart their native language to their children. They also spoke extensively about the challenge they face in trying to accomplish this desire. Some representative responses are presented below.

*Funmi:* You know I used to speak my dialect, as in Yoruba, to them when they were little. After a while I had to explain myself over and over. I think I lost it, so most of the time they now remind me, Mummy, you don’t speak Yoruba to me again.” So I think... it’s a bit of a challenge because you get to do it with them alone. It’s much easier for you

to practice what you're learning, and the practicing part of it is a little bit of challenge. That is the challenge I have, so I know it's going to be hard, it's going to be difficult for me to teach them everything I know and to let them know what I really want them to know 100%.

Funmi expressed a desire that most of the parents interviewed had; to impart their native language unto their children. The mode of getting this accomplished, however, appeared to be the quagmire. Three of the couples interviewed self-identified as inter-tribal, i.e., they were not from the same state or tribe, and therefore did not speak the same language. Such couples spoke English to each other and, consequently to their children.

*John:* I wish we can speak our language to them... I don't mind if they know her language, she's Igbo and I'm Edo. I think it will be good that they have an idea... that they still can associate with where their parents are from.

*Martha:* English is a common language that we speak right from Nigeria, so coming here it didn't change anything. But back home, their grandparents were helpful in teaching them the language. Yes, their grandparents were helpful in teaching them the language.

A number of parents noted that they were aware that the task of teaching their children their native language was challenging but not impossible, as they had heard of, or knew of children of immigrant families who had learned their parents' native language. They attributed this success to providing the children with a consistent exposure to the native language either by speaking it more frequently, or having someone around who would dedicate themselves to speaking the language to them; someone like a grandmother.

*Akin:* Back in New York, I used to work with a guy, he's an engineer [and] his name is Femi, he's a Nigerian guy. After working with him for many months, I realized that this guy wasn't somebody like me that came from Nigeria, that's an immigrant. He was born here. He wasn't just born here by Nigerian parents, his father was a Nigerian that came here to study, and his mother was an African American. This guy could speak Yoruba just like I would speak Yoruba. I was challenged. That was my biggest challenge about parenting in my whole life.

*Ime:* Mexican people, they don't speak English at home. Once the child is born they speak (Spanish), that's all the child hears. When the child grows up s/he will say, "Si! Si!" Then the child will be learning English instead of their language. But we didn't start like that. It's very, very important that they should know how to speak their native language.

*Ada:* I have a friend whose kids were born here, but they speak Igbo as well as English, and I wondered how they did it. They said they started from when they were born to speak Igbo in the house, but they speak English outside of the house. They were also lucky to have their grandma in the house with them. So they speak Igbo all the time. But with my own kids, I didn't know I had to start speaking Igbo right from the beginning because my mom wasn't here. It's now that my mom is here that I told her to start speaking Igbo with the kids.

On the other hand, some parents were of the opinion that learning the native language was an unnecessary and unproductive exercise as the children would never need it, and they would do much better learning a language that would be useful to them in an international sphere.

*Grace:* I don't think so because they are here, they're not going home, and they're not going anywhere. Even me, I don't think of... unless I retire and go back home, I really don't want to live there. Me, I don't think it's important; it's what they hear [that] they speak so... If I were able to speak to them, that's fine, but since it's 2 different languages, which one do they learn? So it's not really important. To me, I prefer they speak Spanish where they can cope with people here, than for them to speak what they won't use.

*Stella:* So why not speak French and Spanish that you relate to? Because language is to be able to communicate, so you communicate with the people you're living with. We are able to speak Nigerian languages 'cause we were in Nigeria. Now they are not there. Like me, I go and come [back]... [For] three weeks, I go to Nigeria and come back; I don't even need it anymore so why bother your head so much? If they were able to, I would have been proud, but since they don't have it, I don't think it's a default at all.

*Efehi:* We speak English at home (apart from the greeting). Even though my wife and I are from different villages, it is important to teach them greeting in a native language because it is a greeting both of us use in our native villages. We are more comfortable speaking English. If both of us were speaking the same language I would want them to

learn. We value the language for them and if we can we would teach them, but we are more comfortable speaking English.

For the most part, the parents desired for their children to speak their native language to some degree. They considered it an aspect of identifying with their parents' heritage culture and acquiring a bi-cultural identity. It is important to note that all of the parents shared that they made sure their children learned how to offer salutations in the native language. It would appear that, even though teaching the children the full range of their native language is not feasible at this time, teaching them the rudimentary aspects of the 'native tongue' enables a bi-cultural awareness; this notion is discussed further in the next section.

#### **Category 7: Bi-cultural Children: "But I am Nigerian, mom."**

The idea of bi-culturalism is heavily woven into parents' narratives. As they told their stories of how they want their children to learn and imbibe certain aspects of Nigerian culture, while immersed in the more pervasive American culture, parents revealed their desire to make sure their children experience, and hopefully internalize a dual culture. Some of the parents shared their attitude of hoping and praying that the children internalize some of their Nigerian culture.

*Akin:* It's challenging, right [to have two cultures]. They go out there, they are an American person; they come in here hearing another kind of language.

*Funmi:* I'm not a big fan of imposing it on them. I will introduce it to them. I hope they will embrace it, but if not...

*John:* I love America, but I think it will be nice... it's not a necessity or an absolute but ... I think it will be good that they have an idea, and still can associate with where their parents are from.

*Kehinde:* You can't force them, you can only talk and pray. We are praying that God will help them see that their parents' goals for them are in their best interest. Achieving that

dream is the best for the family and best for them. We just keep praying that God will open their eyes to see that.

Parents appear to engage their children in bi-cultural experiences primarily through food, and language experiences as referenced earlier, as well as through exposure to Nigerian media, occasional event gatherings, and trips to Nigeria (when possible). Since they are unable to provide a more comprehensive cultural experience, these frames of reference are employed to bring sustained home country awareness.

*Martha:* We never introduced it [Nigerian movies] to them, except 'Nigeria's got talent' and my first son watched it and he enjoyed it!

*Stella:* Last year, we went to Nigeria, that was their first time, and we tell them 'this is Nigeria,' and try to explain to them... It's good because it makes them see the other side of... not only saying it, but them seeing it; understanding the culture is good so that they know.

*Sade:* We go to an African church, so the kids have an African community to make reference to. It was not by choice to join an African church, perhaps it was because we are Africans and so we feel comfortable in the African church. So our kids have that community.

*Tunde (father):* The kids watched me watch Nigeria play soccer. When Nigeria is playing they know their colors. There is little they can take in now, but with time they will be exposed to more. They went to Nigeria when they were younger.

*Juliet:* My whole family is here so the kids get to interact with them. We celebrate holidays, but it's all about Nigeria to me first. I mix it; we celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup> as much as we celebrate October 1<sup>st</sup> [Nigerian Independence Day]. The green and white, the flag, music, and I get the kids involved too. My sister usually invites me when they have a get-together; different people usually have different parties so we attend most of the youth ones and wear the green and white sometimes. We do the flag; it's all about Nigerian music. With [regards to] my daughter; she is more open and familiar with Nigerian music than American music.

These cultural frames of reference appear to be tied to parents' own degree of ethnic identification within the new culture. It is interesting to note that the mothers in the study were

the most emphatic about behavioral expectations and cultural attitudes that they held and were socializing their children into. This is in agreement with previous research by Knight et al. (2011) with Mexican-American immigrants, which implicates maternal-child interactions in the development of adolescent ethnic identity, as well as Mexican-American cultural values. Most of the parents agreed that experiencing dual cultures would pose an adaptation challenge for their children.

*John:* There are some issues because they are two different cultures. They go to school, they experience a different culture, they come home, and they experience something different.

*Sade:* There are children who can speak multiple languages, so it's an advantage to have multi-cultural heritage. There has to be a balance. Let the child see how they can balance the cultures. Sometimes they can have conflict though. I took them to an Independence Day parade, and the younger one was complaining that there were too many people in the parade. She said that was why she liked being a Nigerian, because they don't make too much of a fuss about independence. I told her not to talk like that about her country. She said, "But I am Nigerian, mom". I told her, "You're an American too. They are proud of their country and that's why they came out like that." After the parade, she said she was embarrassed and that was why she had made the comments. Sometimes they get conflicted about which culture they belong to: Nigerian or American. I will possibly talk to her more about it because she will have to find a way to reconcile both.

Some other parents, however, perceived biculturalism as an advantage for their children's social development.

*Stella:* I think it's an advantage because they like both. If you ask them, "You want to go back to Nigeria?" They will say 'yea', so I think they like Nigeria, and they like both, so I think it's an advantage. They are always proud of saying it, so I think it's an advantage. It helps them to behave more.

*Ada:* It's difficult to know the right one. You get confused. If I do it this way, is it the right one? Or if I do it that way, [is it the right way?]. At the same time you have to choose the one that is more beneficial. It is really difficult though, because anybody that is doing two different things will find it difficult. The advantage is that you try the other side of a culture and see how good it is so that you don't know only one. Like an

American knows only one. The fact that my kids are bicultural will give them more pride, depending on how you teach them. They will like it because they have American culture and another culture. They will be proud because there is a difference. Some people who don't have a culture are interested in those that do.

*Martha:* If my own kid that had the opportunity of knowing their roots and I'm not exposing that to them, down the line they will feel bad about it; maybe 10, 20, 30, 40 years down the line. That is why I want to do my best; I want to do my part. Because you see a lot of Black Americans, they feel so bad they don't know their roots, they can't trace their culture, and then some of them feel insulted that they don't know their roots.

This concern with their children's socio-cultural future informs their current parenting decisions and practices. It is important to note that the child-participants in this study exhibited an attitude of being co-constructors in their own ethnic identity creation. Their interview responses to the question 'where are you from?' resulted in 8 out of 15 of them stating that they were from Nigeria (one of them stated that she could not remember where she was from), indicating that they might already be choosing an ethnic identity of their own. Their awareness of Nigerian culture and values was decidedly developed and sustained by the nuclear family system, as some of them shared.

*Jacob (M<sup>2</sup>, 10<sup>3</sup>):* I know about the food because my mom makes it sometimes. Sometimes it's okay, but other times I don't really like it, and that's pretty much it.

*Seyi (M, 6):* I know about Nigeria from mom and dad. It's a big place with lots of people.

*Ife (F<sup>4</sup>, 7):* I know about Nigeria from mommy and daddy. It's good to have parents from Nigeria because I get to know more about Nigeria.

*Seun (M, 9):* I know about Nigeria from mommy and daddy, and I have travelled to Nigeria.

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<sup>2</sup> Male

<sup>3</sup> Age

<sup>4</sup> Female



The children made reference to food and language as properties of the Nigerian culture that they have been frequently exposed to, enough to at least, have an opinion about. It is important to note that the children's ages (6-10) informed their tendency to focus on the more concrete components of their bicultural experience, i.e., food and language. The more abstract concept of 'what is it like to have parents from Nigeria, and to live in the U.S.?' did not receive distinct responses. Some answers included "I don't know", "I get to do different things", and "good; I just like it the way it is." Children's use of food and language as a measure of their degree of 'Nigerian-ness' correlates with the cultural components that parents have asserted they want their children to internalize.

*Jude (M, 7):* I know about the food, like suya (a Nigerian beef delicacy) and stuff, and that Nigerians like spice more than salt. My parents told me about it. Our trip to Nigeria was good...I liked the food.

*Ade (M, 6):* it's cool having parents from Nigeria 'cause I like Nigerian food like chin-chin (a Nigerian pastry).

*Seun:* I eat a lot of Nigerian food, like Nigerian bread.

*Ife:* I eat Nigerian food sometimes. Some of them I don't like...most of them.

*Toun (F, 8):* I understand mommy and daddy's language a little, sometimes. Sometimes I understand what daddy wants. I like eba (a Nigerian dish) and rice and noodles. That's all I like in Nigeria. We go to the African store a lot. There's yam, rice and every kind of Nigerian food.

*Remi (F, 7):* I know how to talk Nigerian, and how to eat Nigerian food. It's fun [having parents from Nigeria] because they get to teach me [about] Nigeria and I get to eat Nigerian food.

From the responses, it appears that the children are afforded the opportunity to decide what cultural sub-components they like and which ones they don't. This freedom to choose is

indicative of parents' adoption of parenting styles similar to that which is prevalent in the U.S. It is also a reflection of how parents truly 'take some' cultural aspects from both cultures to create a blended cultural paradigm for their family.

As a conclusion to this chapter, it is necessary to remember that participants' responses are founded on their experiences as immigrants in the United States thus far. Akin, a father of two, commented that "we didn't grow up in the system; we are still learning through the system." His wife also noted that she tells her children "I don't know, I didn't grow up here" in response to some of their questions. The parenting choices that they make/have made might be different with the passage of time and a change in demographic identifiers. However, the overall approach is that their culture of origin will always serve as an advantageous backdrop upon which to compare and evaluate host culture values in order to adopt a blended cultural approach to parenting. The next chapter will present contributions to, and limitations of the study, a summary of significant findings and implications for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the following topics will be discussed: (1) contributions of the study to the field of immigrant research, (2) limitations of the method selected, (3) summary and significance of findings, and (4) implications of the findings for practice and future research.

### **Contributions of the study**

This study is a qualitative exploration into the acculturative experiences of Nigerian parents and their children living in the United States. There are a number of contributions made by this study to the body of research on immigrant families: (a) The study targets the less highlighted population of Nigerian parents, as compared with previous studies that are largely done with the Asian or Latino American population; (b) The unit of analysis is the family, as opposed to individuals, allowing for an exploration of the acculturative processes employed by the individuals embedded in a dynamic family system; (c) In contrast to quantitative studies that often leave the *why* and *how* questions largely unanswered, this qualitative study addresses those questions; and (d) This study allows participants the *voice* to present their experiences and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences. The participants' point of view drives the study.

The purpose of this study was to provide an expanded understanding of the uniquely dynamic parenting experiences of immigrant parents, as well as an insight into children's emerging acculturation processes, all within a new socio-cultural environment. A qualitative methodology was aptly suited to this exploratory exercise, because it afforded the opportunity to ask participants open-ended questions about the meanings they make of their experiences.

## **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of this study is that it does not allow for generalizations or prediction of outcomes, because the sample is neither randomized nor representative of the Nigerian population in the United States. The findings of this study may not be applicable to all Nigerians living in the United States; pertinent to this claim is the ethnic delineation within the sample families. As stated previously, Nigeria consists of a varied index of ethnic groupings; however the three major groups are *Igbo*, *Hausa*, and *Yoruba*. The participants of this study did not comprise a representative sample of all three major groups, but were varied in their ethnic identification, language spoken, and cultural experiences. Added variations include pre-migration experiences, level of acculturation, different educational levels, social class, and income. The participants in this study belong to the middle to upper-middle class, and so do not reflect the experiences of lower-income immigrant groups.

In addition, the findings of this study may not be applicable to diverse family structures (e.g., single-parents, step-families, transnational families, multi-national families), or to families with different availability of resources (extended family support and ethnic group support).

## **Summary and Significance of Findings**

For the most part, the findings of this study do not stray from the findings of previous studies on immigrant parenting processes. However, the narratives provide insight into the unique and nuanced meanings ascribed to parents' acculturative experiences that inform the parenting decisions they make. Further, study findings show the developmental course of cultural identity in young, second generation immigrant children from a rarely studied nation.

Parents' degree of cultural blending (i.e., the point on the continuum between maintaining the heritage culture and completely adopting the host culture) is an indication of the

type of acculturation they have adopted, and also a guide for how enculturated they want their children to be. The number and types of cultural values that they would like to see their children adopt is influenced by the social ecological factors of the host culture environment, or the ‘system,’ as described by some of the parents. Additionally, these decisions are influenced by context and the potency of cultural attitudes that are more visceral than cognitive. As one of the parents noted, “It’s not a desire to harm the child, but it’s just that thing in you...” With specific reference to the categories of parental authority and discipline, it would appear that parents metaphorically put on a coat of authoritative parenting that involves more talking and explaining, but if aggravated by a situation, the ingrained authoritarian style of yelling, spanking, and asserting absolute authority tends to re-surface. An awareness of this tendency will enable relevant service professionals, like family life educators and social workers, to help immigrant parents reconcile dual parenting styles.

Parenting decisions made are reflections of parents’ acculturation type. Most of the parents implied and stated that they prefer to blend the host and heritage cultures; a determination that is, most likely, facilitated by the moderate cultural distance between Nigerian and US culture. Socio-cultural similarities include the use of English as the national official language, and the pervasiveness of American media, entertainment, and fashion, among other similarities. One of the parents even commented that many Nigerians are more ‘Americanized’ than they are as immigrants. This socio-cultural asset supports an easier adaptation to the new culture, enabling an integrated form of acculturation that may make the decision to blend both host and heritage cultures much easier.

Language is an aspect of shared cultural identity within a group (Tingvold et al., 2012), and is a key component of immigrant parents’ ethnic identity. All the parent participants of this

study desired to pass on this cultural heritage to their children, but shared that they perceived it to be a ‘Herculean’ task, and reported that they were not doing as well as they should in teaching their children. The data from this study indicates that parents utilize the unique potential that they have, as international migrants, to assess the value and opportunities inherent in both heritage and host cultures, and decide what attitude or skill will best benefit their individual and collective goals for success. As noted by half of the parents, their preference would be for their children to achieve the practical goal of learning the language that would best enable communication in the ‘new world’ and in other cultures as well, as ‘you never know where you will find yourself’; in the case of the U.S., English and Spanish were the most chosen. This conscious decision to encourage additive language acquisition is, perhaps, a result of parents’ own experiences of seizing opportunities for success in a new culture. This seems to signify a distinct acculturation type that could be described as *expanded acculturation*; a phenomenon that is indicated by immigrants’ inclinations to adopt or adapt to attitudes and behaviors that will help them adapt to environments/cultures distinct, but similar to the current host culture.

All the parent participants mentioned or alluded to a constant striving to maintain a ‘balance’ between both cultures for them and their children. Immigrant parents tend to use their heritage culture as a frame of reference for assessing the value of host culture norms; the topic of polite greeting (or lack thereof), in the new culture was strongly decried by participants. However, participants also applied host culture norms as a frame of reference for critically assessing the value of Nigerian cultural norms; the norm of authoritarian parenting that ‘shuts children down’ was equally criticized by participants. This bi-directional evaluation is a balancing act, aimed at helping parents maintain a sense of ethnic identity that, in this case, would be an integrated ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992). As they evaluate the cultural

expectations and norms of both cultures, they create a unique cultural mindset that was different from traditional Nigerian customs but suitable for their current social ecology. As one parent noted, a Nigerian would consider it rude if they encountered a child who ‘talked back’ to an adult. He shared that he had come to understand that the child was not trying to be rude, but was adopting ‘their’ way of talking here in America. The modifications that parents make to their initial home- culture expectations enable a truly Nigerian-American identity; one that they can pass on to their children as ‘the best of both worlds’ (Nesteruk & Marks, 2011).

Immigrant parents tend to maintain pre-migration cultural attitudes, and world views that they believe to be necessary for their children to be well-rounded individuals. Some of the mothers in this study opined that American children were ‘too pampered,’ ‘not tested,’ and would grow up unable to ‘withstand stress’. They asserted that they were intentional in showing their children ‘tough love’ by not giving in to their every need, and by teaching them to acknowledge their responsibilities and obligations to the family through performing household chores without expecting a reward; a reflection of the prevailing parenting attitude that they had experienced, growing up in Nigeria. Concurrently, parents explained that they appreciated how American children are raised to be ‘bold,’ independent, and assertive; they shared a desire for their children to adopt these attitudes, but not to the extremeness of ‘being rude’. A few noted that it was a different scenario from Nigerian culture where children are raised to be ‘seen and not heard,’ to be unquestioningly obedient, and always deferential to adults. Parents’ narratives revealed a desire, and an attitude of combining both cultural perspectives for the ultimate goal of raising, what they perceive to be, well-rounded and responsible children. Parents’ narratives shed light on the *process* (not the end-product) of integration; the best form of assimilation, as proposed by Berry (1997).

Parental authority and discipline were the most salient categories addressed by parents in their narratives. Although there was no specific question addressing discipline or authority, the greater portion of parents' narratives reflected their opinions and experiences of these emergent categories. Having immigrated from a more collectivistic and communal environment, parents were socialized into a cultural attitude that children are answerable to any elder or older adult (Hron, 2008). Parents shared their views on how conflicted they felt about implementing this practice, and how they are adjusting to parenting around the cultural and legal constraints they perceive in the U.S. Specific reference was frequently made to children's ability to call 911 on their parents if they are spanked; a perception that echoes the results of a study on West African parents in New York (Rasmussen et al., 2013). The parents in that study equally complained of parental disempowerment and the feeling that they were legally restrained from caring for their children. The school environment was perceived as the 'training ground' for inculcating ideas of independence from parents; where children are 'taught their rights' about what discipline strategies their parents could and could not use on them. Parents viewed it, not necessarily as a loss of a discipline strategy, but as an assault on their parental sovereignty and authority over their own children.

The notion that children may call 911 on their parents if punitive discipline strategies are used is clearly a narrative passed around through communal networks. A few of the parents told stories of friends who had experienced it, or who had told them stories to validate that claim. Other immigrant families also profess to 'hearing' from their communal networks that spanking is prohibited in the U.S., and that school teachers and police officers vigilantly check for incidences of abuse (Kim, Im, Nahm, & Hong, 2012). Although there is growing awareness of research-based claims that spanking is not an effective discipline strategy in the long run, it is



legal in all 50 states of the U.S., but with varying interpretations of how to implement spanking (TIME, 2014). In the state of Texas, parents can spank their children if they have a reasonable belief that it is in the best interest of the child's welfare and discipline (2004 Texas Penal Code, Sec. 9.61). Parents, apparently unaware of this law, have internalized a perception of the 'system' as diminishing their sovereignty and authority over their children, in disciplining and directing them. As one of the parents noted, if the child grows up not 'complying' with the authority and direction of the parent, and for the best interest of the family, there is nothing they can do but to pray.

Parents' reactions to the perception of curbed authority are an embodiment of immigrants' adaptation to a new socio-cultural world. It is a nuanced acculturation phenomenon that exemplifies the interactions that happen between the meso- and micro-ecological systems within which the immigrant family lives. Communal, school, and legal interactions lead to perceptions of limitations and freedoms afforded parents in the execution of their duties as parents. In the face of contrasting cultural norms, parents tend to relinquish some of their pre-migration norms in order to adopt host culture norms of parenting (Kim et al., 2012; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011). The parents in this study appreciated the prevailing parenting and discipline styles in America which consist of reasoning with children, explaining to children, being involved in their lives, respecting them as individuals, time-outs, and removal of privileges. Some attested to changing their parenting styles to the more democratic American style because 'it allows you to breathe first', and then address the behavior. Some also noted, however, that if overly aggravated by a child's behavior, they revert back to the parenting style they were socialized into in the heritage country, which includes spanking and yelling regardless of what the legal consequences were. It would then appear that parents' acculturation to the cultural domains of discipline and

authority is nuanced in terms of context; there is a real tendency for parents to revert to hitherto subdued cultural reactions when aggravated. Of course, this tendency is not unique to immigrant parents, as most parents, regardless of ethnicity, exhibit a stronger reaction if aggravated. It is important to note, however, that Nigerian parents were brought up with this world view of how to effectively discipline their children, and it appears to be lurking just beneath the surface.

Finally, this study collected narrative data from young children in an attempt to throw more light on the *process* of identity development for immigrant children. Specifically, the focus is on the first part of a two-part categorization of ethnic identity development as proposed by Phinney (1992): *ethnic identity affirmation and belonging* and *ethnic identity achievement*. The former entails the growth of positive feelings and pride in one's ethnicity, while the latter involves active exploration and development of a clear sense of self. Children's responses highlighted their developing perceptions of their own Nigerian-ness within the locus of their family.

The data from this study corroborate findings from earlier studies on the influence of parenting practices on ethnic identity development (Su & Costigan, 2009). Parents' narratives directly show and imply that children are made aware of the difference between norms of behavior in the home and those of the society outside the home. Expressions such as "this is how we do things," "you don't 'hi!' me in this house," and descriptions of "our food," impress upon the young child the distinction between the two socio-cultural environments that they mostly inhabit: home and school. Phinney's (1989, 1992) trajectory of ethnic identity development involves an initial stage of minimal conscious consideration of ethnic identity, then exploration of group differences, and finally an identity resolution. The children in this study appear to be

experiencing the second stage, perhaps a lot sooner than other non-immigrant children, because of the differences in home and school culture.

Just over half of the children identified as Nigerian; an indication of their developing pride and affirmation of their Nigerian ethnic heritage. Although young children's responses might not be autonomous because they internalize their parents' teachings and identities as a function of their age, it can be assumed from the freedom of opinion and inclinations that the parents allow them, that they made the identity decision somewhat independently. Children's references to food and their fledgling language development describe the scope of their bi-cultural experience. At this age (6-10), they are unable to make abstract evaluations of the import of being bi-cultural on their psychological well-being. However, the fact that they freely express what parts of the culture they like/dislike supports the comments shared by parents that they don't want to 'force them' to adopt the heritage culture. Some of the parents spoke of presenting the children with the Nigerian culture and hoping that they integrate it. Children's ethnic identity is impacted, not only by the distinct behaviors that parents expect (e.g., greeting, language, diet), but also by the affective associations they attach to these behaviors. Because most of the parent participants do not have the support of a more pervasive ethnic community, children stand a better chance of adopting their parents' heritage culture norms if they make emotional attachments to parents' behavioral expectations.

In conclusion, the children's world view of their behavioral differences and similarities within the host culture seems to be largely sourced from their parents' affective and behavioral acculturation tendencies. The following section will address implications of the findings of this study, for future research purposes.

## **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

This study's presentation of participants' narratives is an attempt to convey the meanings that are constructed in the daily lives of immigrant parents and their children. These narratives serve as a medium for bi-directional acculturation within a larger, more globally oriented society. This bi-directional acculturation would involve the host society learning about and understanding the ethnic minority community and vice versa. It is in this light that some ideas that represent the import of Nigerian parents' acculturation influenced parenting practices, as well as the process of ethnic identity development for their children will be presented.

**Implications for practice.** When families immigrate to a new culture, there is usually a realignment of individual family member's roles. Families who move from a traditional, patriarchal family system to a more egalitarian and democratic environment often struggle to find a way to adapt to their new re-defined roles and powers. These families may feel a sense of inadequacy and diminished parental authority, as reported by participants in this study. The process of integration and the meanings that they make are different for each family; however, each family identified cultural balance as their goal for themselves and their children. Family therapists, social workers, teachers, and policy makers would do well to understand that many Nigerian immigrant parents still hold onto pre-migration parenting styles and expectations for children's behavior, even though they might not be the salient factors that influence parenting decisions. Additionally, practitioners should evaluate immigrants behaviors based on a dual-culture perspective, and not from the frame of reference of the dominant culture.

Although there is limited literature on ethnic identity development in young, middle-childhood children, this study was able to glean some information regarding the beginnings of ethnic identity development. As has been supported by research, ethnic identity development is

crucial to the optimal adjustment of immigrant youth (Phinney et al., 2001). These Nigerian parents seem to desire their children to acquire as much knowledge and affect about Nigerian culture as possible. In furtherance of this goal, they talk to their children about Nigeria, travel with them to visit when they can, introduce and sustain Nigerian cuisine, and try to teach them their 'native tongue'. Nigerian children may also be conflicted about their current or future cultural allegiance. Practitioners such as teachers and mental health professionals would do well to acknowledge this goal and the processes that support it, and encourage children to take pride in their dual cultural heritage. Encouraging all children, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, to do this would be an invaluable lesson in tolerance and multi-culturalism.

**Implications for future research.** Within current extant literature, there is limited research on immigrant African families and their parenting practices within the United States. A greater majority of this research is done with Latin American or Asian populations. Even though these heritage cultures possess structural similarities (i.e., collectivistic, respect and family oriented), there are variations in the more specific interpretations of those concepts. Within the limited research carried out on African immigrants, there are variations in sub-group cultural adaptations, and also individual integrations of both host and heritage cultures. In essence, there are various factors to consider with each immigrant group and/or family and researchers need to be aware of that. Further, researchers need to be cognizant, not only of the fact that parents' pre-migration cultural orientations influences daily affective and behavioral parenting decisions, but also the tendency to be domain and context specific about these decisions. Further research would be useful to see what specific contexts within the new socio-ecological elicit certain acculturative behaviors.

With regards to the interview dynamic, it appeared that the mothers shared more impassioned narratives about the affective indices of their children's enculturation. Perhaps future research could employ a mothers-only or fathers-only sample in order to provide more details on parent socialization practices employed by mothers or fathers and how 'controlling for' gender variables contributes to children's ethnic identity and acculturation. Further, the current study's findings did not support previous research regarding immigrants' tendency to belong to an ethnic group association in order to re-create the communal support system of the heritage culture. Although this study employed the snowball method of sample selection, there was only one participant to who claimed membership in a Nigerian women's association, and another who belonged to an African church with members from across the African continent. In the interest of exploring the influence of group associations on parents' acculturation, parenting practices, and children's ethnic identity development, it would be advantageous for future research to purposefully seek members of a Nigerian association for participation.

Finally, the use of qualitative methodology in research with young children enables researchers to tap into young children's growing cognitive abilities to make sense of their world. A key, however, is in crafting the right questions that will produce as much detail as possible. The sample age-group selected for this study (6-10) consists of children who are in the Piagetian pre-operational to concrete operational stages of development (Piaget, 1977). This age-group possesses the ability to make logical, concrete, inductive interpretations of their experiences to help them create general meanings of their world. For this research study, the format of questions used in interviewing the children involved some abstract questions that required them to consolidate their experiences and abstract a general opinion about their Nigerian cultural experiences. The children's responses were not elaborate and the study was unable to elicit

adequately lengthy narratives from the children. Perhaps developing questions that involved hypothetical situations of displayed culture might help children express the degree of their Nigerian mind set. Questions like ‘imagine that your friends came to visit you and your mom made a Nigerian meal, what would happen?’ At the risk of over-simplifying the process of ethnic identification, it might be a way to elicit more of their experiences and attitudes of ethnic identity.

In conclusion, immigrant parents face the daunting responsibility of not only simultaneously inhabiting two worlds, but also guiding their children through both worlds. The narratives that have been shared in this study have served as an opportunity for self-assessment for the participants, as one of the mothers shared informally; she said it was good for her to think about ‘why we do what we do.’ It is the author’s hope that the readers of this work will glean some insight into the unique strengths, hopes, and opportunities available within this immigrant community, as well as a sympathetic sensitivity for the challenges they face as we all navigate this global village called our world.

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**APPENDIX A  
RECRUITMENT LETTERS**

Dear Mr. /Mrs.

July 13, 2014

I am a PhD candidate at the Louisiana State University's School of Human Ecology writing my dissertation on the experiences of immigrant parents from Nigeria now living in the U.S. Specifically, the study is aimed at finding out two things: (a) the impact of immigration and living in a new culture on parenting processes, and (b) how children with Nigerian parents adjust to life in two cultures: American culture and Nigerian culture.

I am looking for married couples who would be willing to participate in the study, which would include an interview at the participants' convenience.

Criteria for participation include:

- Immigrants from Nigeria
- You do NOT have to be U.S. citizens (can be students on J and F type visas or workers on H1B visas, or Green Card holders)
- Minimum of 4 years of residency in the U.S.
- Married, with at least 1 child aged 6-10 years old

All names and other identifying information about the participants will be kept confidential. If you or anyone you know would like to participate, please contact me either at (225) 326-4207 or conwuj1@lsu.edu. The study is currently under way, so please call or write now!

In advance, thanks for your help. I look forward to talking to you!

Chinwe Onwujuba  
School of Human Ecology  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
(225) 326-4207  
conwuj1@lsu.edu



## **APPENDIX B**

### **STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT**

#### **Study Title**

A tale of two cultures: A qualitative narrative of Nigerian immigrant parenting in the United States.

#### **Purpose of the study**

This research study aims to explore the process and experience of immigration in the lives of Nigerian families living in the US, and to determine how living in a new culture affects parenting practices and adaptation for young children.

#### **Study Procedures**

An interview will be conducted in your home or a public place of your choosing. The interview will last about 60 minutes and will consist of 19 questions addressing your move to the US and the experiences you have had as an immigrant parent. All responses will be treated as confidential; your name will not be associated with the data or any publications that might result from the study. The interview will be audio recorded to eliminate the possibility of errors in reporting the information. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis and the records will be destroyed after all data has been published.

#### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no known risks for participating in the study. The results will however be very helpful to family researchers and professionals in better understanding the experiences of families who come into the US from other cultures and Nigeria in particular.

#### **Consent and signatures**

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I have the option to withdraw at any time. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators: Chinwe Onwujuba ([conwuj1@lsu.edu](mailto:conwuj1@lsu.edu)) 225-326-4207 or Dr. Loren Marks ([lorenm@lsu.edu](mailto:lorenm@lsu.edu)) between the hours of 8:00-4:00 Monday-Friday. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Subject Signature:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_

## **Parental Permission and Child Assent form**

### **Study Title**

A tale of two cultures: A qualitative narrative of Nigerian immigrant parenting and children's cultural adjustment in the United States.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study will try to find out how living in a culture different from parents' culture of origin affects children's lives. Children who are 6-10 years old, whose parents are Nigerian, will participate in the study.

### **Study procedures**

This study will be conducted in Texas. Investigators are Chinwe Onwujuba and Loren Marks. It is a research study with the goal of finding out how children with Nigerian parents adjust to life in two cultures: the American culture and Nigerian culture. Children who are 6-10 years old and who have lived in the US for at least 4 years will be asked 10 questions on their life experiences. There is minimal risk involved and the study is aimed at helping children of immigrant parents adjust to living in an environment with two cultures.

Participation is voluntary, and a child will become part of the study only if both child and parent agree to the child's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the subject's parent may withdraw the subject from the study. Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

### **Child assent**

I,\_\_\_\_\_, agree to be in a study to find out how children who live in the United States, but whose parents are from Nigeria, live and act. I will have to answer some questions for the researcher and my answers will be recorded on tape. I can decide to stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

Child's Signature:\_\_\_\_\_ Age:\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

## Parents' consent

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and I have the option to withdraw him/her at any time. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators: Chinwe Onwujuba ([conwuj1@lsu.edu](mailto:conwuj1@lsu.edu)) 225-326-4207 or Dr. Loren Marks ([lorenm@lsu.edu](mailto:lorenm@lsu.edu)) between the hours of 8:00-4:00 Monday-Friday. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I will allow my child to participate in the study and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions:

*Please answer the questions below as accurately and completely as possible. All answers will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be attached to this form.*

1) Male\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_

2) Age:

- a. 20-30 \_\_\_\_
- b. 30-40 \_\_\_\_
- c. 40-50 \_\_\_\_
- d. 50-60 \_\_\_\_
- e. 60-70 \_\_\_\_

3) What is your current status? [Place an X by the appropriate response].

- a. \_\_\_\_Married [\_\_\_\_Months;\_\_\_\_Years]
- b. \_\_\_\_Divorced [\_\_\_\_Months;\_\_\_\_Years]
- c. \_\_\_\_Widowed [\_\_\_\_Months;\_\_\_\_Years]
- d. \_\_\_\_Separated [\_\_\_\_Months;\_\_\_\_Years]

4) Child(ren):

- a. Age \_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_
- b. Age \_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_
- c. Age \_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_
- d. Age \_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_

5) Where were your children born? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Highest educational level :

- a. Less than high school \_\_\_\_\_
- b. High school graduate/GED \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Some college \_\_\_\_\_
- d. College graduate \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Advanced degree (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7) If you got your degree(s) from a U.S. University, which one(s)?

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8) Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

9) How long have you been living in the US? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

10) How long have you lived in your current neighborhood? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

11) Has your child had neighborhood and/or school experiences with culturally diverse families/friends? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

a. If yes, what cultures?

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12) What states have you lived in?

---



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13) What is your combined family income (please circle one):

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,001 – \$20,000
- \$20,001 – \$40,000
- \$40,001 - \$60,000
- \$60,001 - \$80,000
- \$80,001 - \$100,000
- Over \$100,000

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **Acculturation**

1. What were your reasons for immigrating to the U.S.?)
2. Do you think it is more important for you and your children to maintain your Nigerian cultural heritage, to adapt fully to American culture or to adopt both? Why? Has it been a struggle to do that? (tell me a story).
3. Do you and/or your children belong to any American social group or organization like boys scouts, PTO? If yes/no, why?
4. Culture is made up of the economic, social and physical way of life of a people; do you think that you or your family had to give up any of your cultural traditions/values to adapt to the American society? If so, what are they? (Tell me a story)

#### **Childhood/children**

5. What is your idea of childhood from a Nigerian perspective (i.e., behaviors, values, responsibilities, expectations, roles?). How does it compare with the image of childhood in the U.S.? Can you tell me of a time when you compared the two images?
6. What are your goals for your child/ren? (academic, social/relational, moral) Do you think your goals for your children would be different if you had stayed in Nigeria? If so, how? (jobs, inter-family relations, marriage).
7. What are the benefits of having your children grow up in this country? (follow up: On the downside, what are the challenges of having your children grow up in the U.S.? (Can you think of a time when this challenge occurred?)
8. How much diversity do you see at your child's school, neighborhood?

#### **Parenting**

9. What are the greatest challenges you face as a parent in this country? (Follow-up: What cultural adjustments do you think you had to make as a parent in the US?) (Tell me a story).
10. What family values do you think a typical American family holds and which do you apply/reject? (Can you tell me a story about your experience of this value?)

11. Can you please tell me a story about disagreements between you and your child/ren, and how would you compare that to the disagreements you had with your parents?
12. How would you say “American culture” influences your family and your parenting? (If applicable based on the answer - How do you resist negative influences?) (tell me a story).
13. What language do you speak at home? How important is it to you to have your children know your native language? (Has it been a challenge to make this happen?)
14. Do you and your children have family members in the US, associate with other Nigerians or belong to an association of Nigerians? Why/why not? (what kind of interactions happen there, does the extended family or the association help you in your parenting goals?) (tell me a story)
15. Do you and your children celebrate Nigerian holidays, watch Nigerian media (news, movies, music, T.V.) (Tell me a story)
16. Does your family eat foods from your native culture? How important is it to have your family eat your native foods? (tell me a story)
17. Some researchers indicate that being bicultural is conflicting – being torn between two worlds. Others say that having a membership in two worlds is beneficial. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having two cultures/ two languages for your children / you / your family as a whole?
18. Do you and your family visit Nigeria or have you ever thought of going back to Nigeria?
19. Is there anything else that you would like to add or take back? Is there anything I didn't ask you about but you think is important to the understanding of Nigerian cultural adjustment and parenting in American culture?

### **Interview Questions-Children**

- 1) Where are you from?
- 2) Do your parents talk to you about Nigeria? (What do you know about Nigeria? How do you know that?)
- 3) Tell me what you think about Nigeria (the people, food and language)?
- 4) What is it like having parents (and friends) from Nigeria?
- 5) How do you feel about speaking your parents' native language?

- 6) Do you go with your family to Nigerian events? What do you think about what happens there?
- 7) Do you get/like to watch Nigerian shows/movies on T.V., internet?
- 8) Do you tell your friends things about Nigeria or Africa? Tell me of a time when you did.
- 9) Would you like to travel to Nigeria to visit/live?
- 10) How do you feel about the food you eat at home that is different from what your friends may eat? Which do you prefer?



## APPENDIX E IRB APPROVAL

### ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair  
131 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.6792  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu) | [lsu.edu/irb](http://lsu.edu/irb)

**TO:** Loren Marks  
Child & Family Studies

**FROM:** Robert C. Mathews  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** May 3, 2013  
**RE:** IRB# 3386

**TITLE:** Immigrant parenting and children's cultural adjustment among Nigerian Families living in the US

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review type:** Full ☐ Expedited ☒ **Review date:** 5/6/2013

**Risk Factor:** Minimal ☒ Uncertain ☐ Greater Than Minimal ☐

**Approved** ☒ **Disapproved** ☐

**Approval Date:** 5/6/2013 **Approval Expiration Date:** 5/5/2014

**Re-review frequency:** (annual unless otherwise stated)

**Number of subjects approved:** 40

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:** (if applicable) ☐

**By:** Robert C. Mathews, Chairman 

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –**  
**Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

# Application for Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects

This application is used for projects/studies that cannot be reviewed through the exemption process.



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair  
131 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
irb@lsu.edu  
lsu.edu/irb

Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include two copies of the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below. Once the application is completed, please submit to the IRB Office for review and please allow ample time for the application to be reviewed. Expedited reviews usually takes 2 weeks. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 3 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru F.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

<sup>2</sup>If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://ohrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://research.lsu.edu/files/item26774.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator\*: Dr. Loren Marks

Rank Professor

\*PI must be an LSU Faculty Member

Dept:

Child & Family Studies

Ph:

225-578-0433

E-mail:

lorenm@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

Chinwe Onwujuba, Child & Family Studies, PhD candidate, 225-326-4207, conwuj1@lsu.edu

3) Project Title:

Immigrant parenting and children's cultural adjustment among Nigerian Families living in the US.

4) Proposal Start Date: 6/1/2013

5) Proposed Duration Months: 6 months

6) Number of Subjects Requested: up to 40

7) LSU Proposal #:

8) Funding Sought From: N/A

**ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR** named above

I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers) in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance (FWA00003892) with OHRP and 45 CFR 46 (available from <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>). I also understand that copies of all consent forms must be maintained at LSU for three years after the completion of the project. If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Signature of PI

Loren D. Marks

Date

4/26/2013

**ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR** named above. If multiple Co-Investigators, please create a "signature page" for all Co-Investigators to sign. Attach the "signature page" to the application.

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature of Co-PI(s)

Chinwe Onwujuba

Date

4/26/13

IRB# 3386	LSU Proposal #
<input type="radio"/> Full	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Expedited	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Human Subjects Training	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Complete Application	

Study Approved By:  
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
Approval Expires: 5/5/2014

## **VITA**

Chinwe L. Onwujuba was born to Joseph and Maria Ugwu in Columbia, Missouri. She grew up in Nigeria to experience the wonderful tapestry of Nigerian cultures and people. Chinwe is married to Charles Onwujuba; they both have a son and a daughter.

In 2001 she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. After her graduation, she worked in a bank for three years, got married and relocated to the United States to pursue a graduate degree. In 2005 she earned her graduate degree in human ecology, with a concentration in family, child and consumer sciences. She will graduate from Louisiana State University with a Doctor of Philosophy in human ecology in 2015.

During her graduate program she worked as a graduate assistant in the human ecology preschool and became an instructor for child care providers with Volunteers of America: Child Care Key. Chinwe is a member of the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Education, and the Society for Research in Human Development.